

***Saudade* or the Erotic Journey Back to Oneself:
an enquiry through sculpture**

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Abstract

This is a practice-led research project with the focus of the research being conducted by my practice as a visual artist.

This project explores notions centred on the concept of the ontological journey, here equated with the being's search for his/her inner spiritual nature.

The theme is interrogated through the production of three pieces of three-dimensional artwork in tandem with a contextually significant exhibition space, and accompanying written component.

Whilst having several points of interaction, each of the objects endorses one fundamental aspect of the ontological journey. These are:

- the search or quest by the being for his/her counterpart.
- the encounter of those two aspects: the quest's teleology.
- the revelation of the spiritual interior which the journey entails: the process of inner revelation.

Saudade, an idiosyncratic Portuguese sense of nostalgia, is here considered as the underlying emotion that propels the search. Eros is the attractive and binding energy that impels the quest, and is responsible for the consummation of the journey.

The main method used in the production of the artwork is 'poetic logic' (Tarkovsky), a process of creation by semantic and formal analogy. Symbolism, here understood as the formal representation of a prototypical idea, plays a crucial role in the production and analysis of the sculpture.

The underlying philosophy behind the artistic enquiry is the philosophy of alchemy, here understood mainly from the perspectives of the interplay of duality in nature, and as a process of transmutation.

Ana Clara Jorge Bárbara

This thesis is dedicated to
Dr Maria Margarida Pinheiro Marques

I have given you , O Adam, no fixed abode, and no visage of your own, nor any special gift, in order that whatever place or aspect or talents you yourself will have desired, you may have and possess them wholly in accord with your desire and your own decision. Other species are confined to a prescribed nature, under laws of my making. No limits have been imposed upon you, however; you determine your nature by your own free will, in the hands of which I have placed you. I have placed you at the world's very centre, that you may the better behold from this point whatever is in the world. And I have made you neither celestial nor terrestrial, neither mortal nor immortal, so that, like a free and able sculptor and painter of yourself, you may mould yourself wholly in the form of your choice.

Pico della Mirandola, *Oratio de hominis dignitate*

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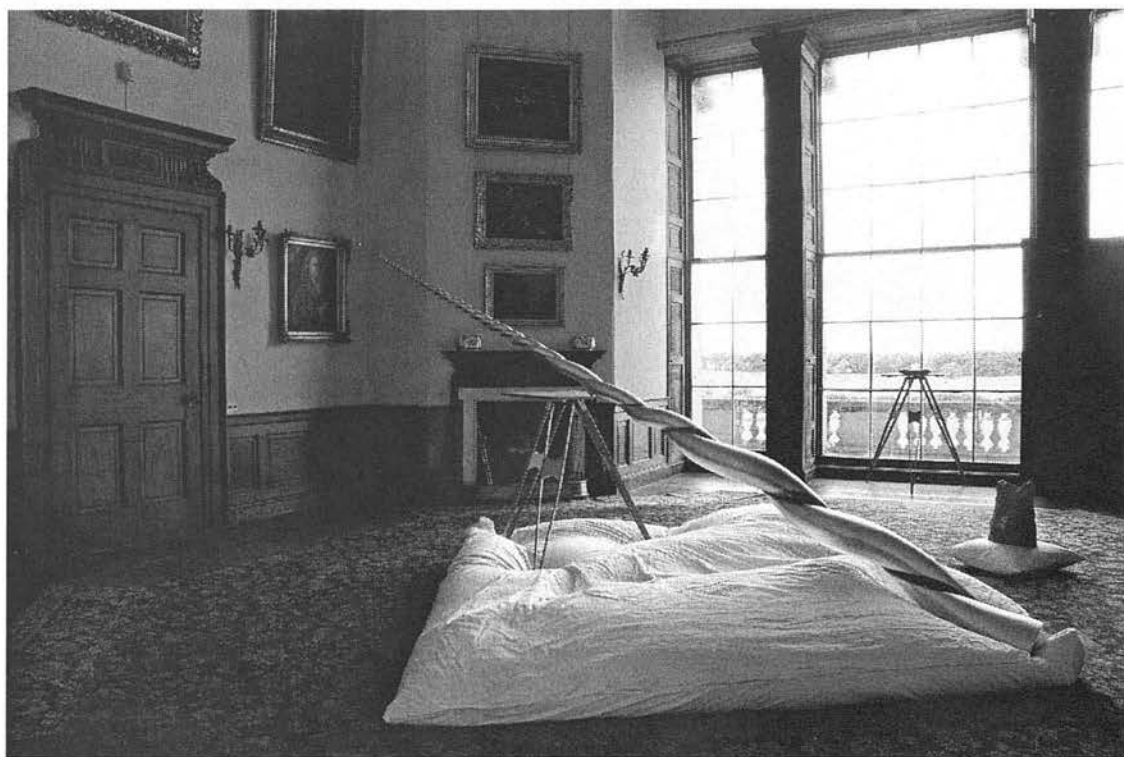

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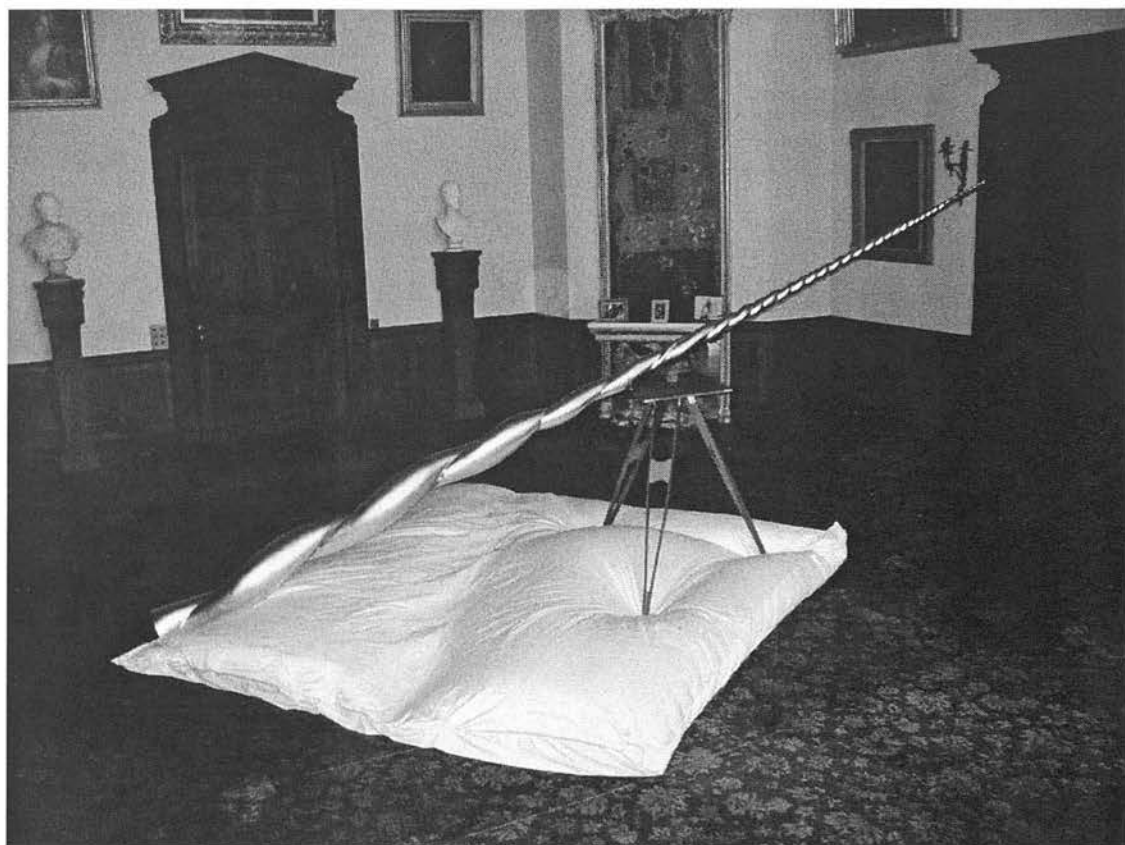
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General view of the artwork in the Octagon, Gosford House. At the centre Aveo Amor, near the window Seal Upon Your Heart, on the floor, Saudade for the Future.



Aveo Amor (2006)

helix 500 x 37 x 1 cm, jesmonite, red bole, gold
pillow 300 x 300 x 300 cm, doupion silk
plane table 121 x 55 x 37 cm, wood



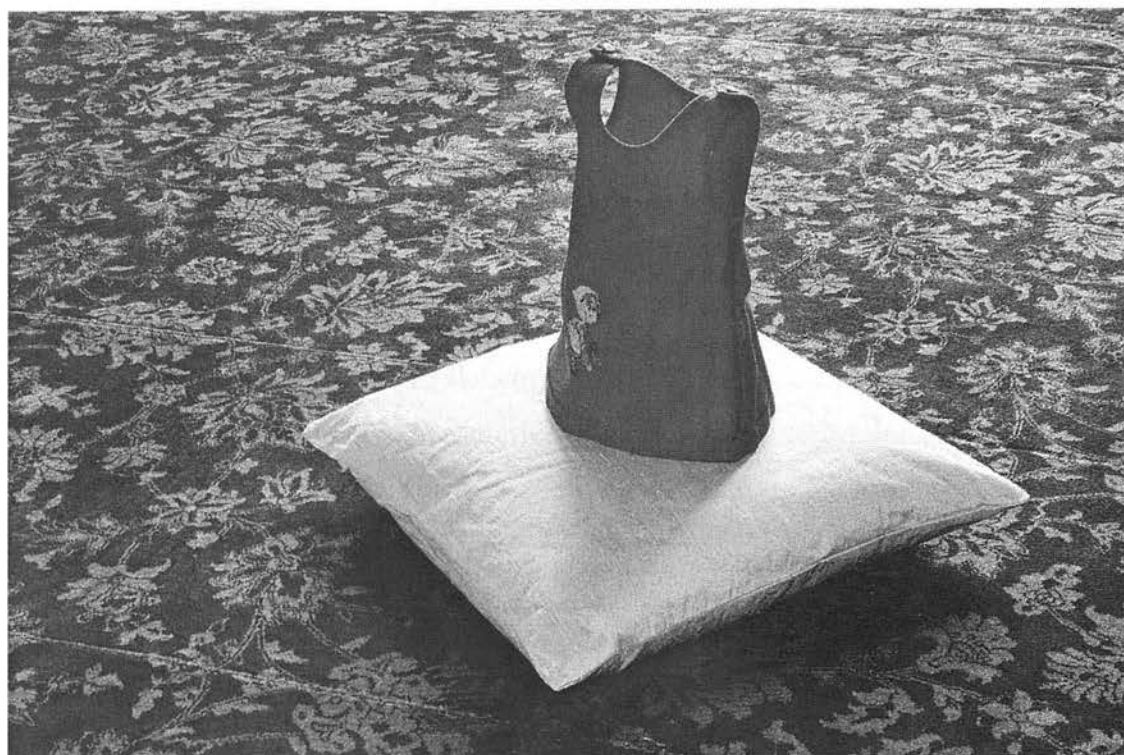
Seal Upon Your Heart (2006)

rings 2.5 x 1.9 x 1.1cm, gold-plated silver

cube 8 x 8 x 8 cm, crystal glass

pillow 32 x 32 x 6 cm, doupion silk

plane table 121 x 55 x 37 cm, wood



Saudade for the Future (2006)

dress 31 x 18 x 41 cm, felt

buttons 1.3 cm diameter

pillow 60 x 60 x 12 cm, doupion silk.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This is a practice-based research project with the focus of the research being conducted by my practice as a visual artist.

The work explores sculptural representations around the theme of the 'ontological journey', i.e., the being's search for Self.

The artwork within its context in Gosford House, East Lothian, is the tool that conducts the research in the sense that it is simultaneously object and process. For the purposes of this enquiry the artwork is considered from the point of view of its making – the influences, processes and methods which lie in its origin and development – and from the perspective of the finished object in the space where it is exhibited.

A sense of interrelation, interdependence and 'interconference' of meaning between place and object is at the origin of the practice but also serves as tool for later analysis.

The research project comprises three objects placed within a room of a specific shape – an octagonal room – within a house which itself stands in a precise geographical location to the city of Edinburgh, in alignment with the city's castle and the Royal Mile.

The objects are a red felt dress from when I was three years of age, with gilded buttons, which is presented turned inside out; a gilded helical form (reminiscent of a 'unicorn's horn') resting on a silk pillow and placed in such an angle that once a year, from the position where it stands, aligns with the star Sirius; and gold-plated cast rings of the fingers of two lovers exactly fitting one inside the other and placed on a crystal cube with skin imprints on two of its faces.

Casting is the major sculpting technique employed in the making of the artwork – casts taken from a carved object (the spiralled form) and from the human body (the rings). The dress is an appropriated object.

The enquiry emanates from the philosophy of alchemy, a cosmological view which holds as its basic premise that nature is animated and has a double nature: matter and Spirit. Its

central concept is that of the intimate, undissociable relation between the macrocosm and the microcosm – the material principle of Earth (microcosm) is the reflection of deeper Spiritual realities (macrocosm). Matter – phenomenon – is therefore understood as a link with the world of the Spirit. In the alchemical conception of the world there was, originally, an undifferentiation between the two cosmos, which have been separated at some stage in ‘time’ but which keep their relation of identification. Consequently, the manifested, phenomenological world becomes a function of the dynamic interplay of complimentary dualities which journey to each other. Interacting in an erotic embrace they become united into a *perfected* one. This union is the *hierosgamos* (the ‘sacred union’, the ‘alchemical conjunction’) or the finding of the Philosopher’s Stone. This is the *telos* (ultimate aim) of the alchemical journey as ontological quest.

In this research the artwork is a poetic construction within this cosmology.

In this work it is considered that the relationship between the being and its lover has relations of equivalence with the relation between the being and its intrinsic – ‘true’ – nature. In this sense the erotic encounter between the being and its lover is the image of the encounter of the being with Self. Hence, the concept of the interplay of duality – the being’s relation with the lover as image of the inherent nature of him or herself – with the movement towards oneness being central in the artwork.

The aspiration towards the *hierosgamos* – the alchemical conjunction – is understood here from a teleological perspective, that is, from the point of view of the aiming at the final cause, the resolution of opposites in the image of the *aligned* lovers, the lovers (or the two sides of the being) in a relation of intimate *unique* accordance. This is evidenced in the alignment between the helix¹ and the star, and the exact fitting of the rings.

Notions around Eros – the attracting, binding and bonding force between the lovers – and *Saudade* (an idiosyncratic Portuguese sense of nostalgia) are considered in their relation with the ontological quest. *Saudade* defines the longing – thus the desire – for a lost sense of wholeness that was once the natural state of the being. Eros is the force that, responsible for the movement towards the once lost wholeness, will ultimately satisfy the desire for that plenitude.

¹ Henceforth referred to as ‘horn’.

The being loaded with *saudade* searches, through Eros for itself. The erotic appeal, or the attraction, between the lovers is the image of this search. The erotic journey is the path followed back to the unity lost. Remembering its wholeness, the being *feels saudade* of itself, which prompts it to embark on the journey of return. This journey requires the externalising of the interior of the being, of its intrinsic, 'true' nature.

The search is therefore for that which from the point of view of alchemy is understood to be already within. This is the essence that is the Spirit (non-manifested) and which is reflected in the body side (manifested). The two aspects are distinct yet not separated, they keep an intimate relation of correspondence, the body being an 'incomplete' representation of the Spirit. The aim of alchemy is to overcome the separation of the two aspects, thus returning the person to his/her 'original' state of pure Spirit. This is done *through the knowledge of the body*. Ultimately the being, before polarized into body and Spirit, will become one undistinguishable whole. The essence – the Spirit – is that what through the action of Eros, will be reached – that is, *known* – through the journey. The journey is the alchemical process itself; the loving, erotic embrace is image of the encounter. The artwork Saudade for the Future revolves around this central concept of 'the revelation of the interior'.

The artwork as object placed in context attempts to represent something which is not from the level of direct perception or sensation, but instead points to the suggestion of something which presents itself to the sensibility in an indirect mode: i.e., as *image*. In this work the 'real' object is *absent* because what is being considered is an ontological process and, essentially, a teleology. In brief, the artwork aims at representing an *unrepresentability*, a *non-figurability* – the erotic encounter of the lovers, i.e., the *becoming* of the being into his/her wholeness, here equated with the Self, that is, the *hierosgamos*. The use of materials is therefore relevant: namely gold, which is the pervading material used in all three objects, used to signify the work is an image and not an 'end' in itself. And also the use of silk, which suggests qualities of transformation dealt with in the artwork.

As such, materials and sculpting processes are used for their symbolic qualities. If gold is used for its capability of representing the unrepresentable, the casting process, as the main

sculptural technique employed in this research, is considered for its conceptual suggestions on process, reversal and touch issues.

In the *hierosgamos* the lovers conjunct because they *touch* in an erotic embrace. In that conjunctive touch – or as consequence of it – blending their natures, they are transmuted.

‘Touch’ has here a metaphorical quality but also a pragmatic one. The casting process makes use of the properties of touch and reverses the interior into the exterior – the innermost surface of the mould becomes the outermost surface of the cast. The most intimate becomes the most exposed. Saudade for the Future in particular suggests this.

Furthermore, casting as a technique involves a process in which the sculpting materials come together. The casting substances ‘approach’ each other, the liquid plaster encounters the hardened plaster of the mould, resulting in the cast. Therefore the substances *journey towards each other*, the mould and the coagulating material poured into it – and it is by contact, by *touch*, that form appears.

If historically the representation of the erotic touch stands at the origin of the enquiry of this research, this has evolved, through the experience of the practice itself into the evidence that touch *itself* cannot be represented. Only its effects can be. Hence, the abstract aspect of the touch between the horn and Sirius – which represents a touch which is not physical. Likewise the hollowness seen *through* the rings is another suggestion of this ‘unrepresentability’.

Gosford House is set in a precise geographical alignment with the Royal Mile in the city of Edinburgh and faces West-West-Northwest; the room where the objects exist is in the shape of an octagon. Symbolically, ‘octagon’ is associated with the place that exists ‘in between’ - the symbolical significations of the circle and the square *combined*. The contextual situation of the artwork is clearly one of *relationship* and *transition*.

Saudade being the nostalgic feeling for the wholeness of the being is thus the emotion lying at the origin of the journey the being undertakes in its search for its lover and for Self. During the journey – the alchemical, *purifying* journey – and because of it, the true,

unique nature of the being, surfaces, and so the Self is revealed. This is the encounter with Selfhood. Saudade for the Future, which is an object I was using at the time when my earliest memory became imprinted in my mind, is turned inside-out: an object coming from the time of when the notion of myself as being arises. The beginning of the *desire* for the revelation of the 'true' nature... Saudade for the Future contains the concept of the revelation of the intrinsic nature of the being. The capacity for loving stems from this inherent quality within him or her. This is why the being is capable of resonating with the energy of Eros. Loving requires truthfulness and that truth is found inside. In order to love, the essential nature has to be revealed. The erotic journey requires the externalising of the true nature of the being, the getting to *know* its nature, that is, the Self. The dress is turned inside out as image of that necessary revelation.

Eros is a force of togetherness, the horn desires the star and the star desires the horn. In Aveo Amor Eros is both at the origin of this desire and is also the energy responsible for the movement, the journey of the two to each other.

In their movement through sidereal space they express their reciprocal love, and their mutual attraction. The unstoppable and predictable movement of the Earth, carries the horn through space and aligns the star and the horn once a year. The sidereal movement is the journey they both embark upon in order to meet. The moment of their alignment is the moment of their erotic, amorous encounter. It is their hierogamy, it is their conciliation. In that instant there is no desire but the *consummation* of their desire. Desire extinguishes through its own consummation. When they align they mingle their light and, their nature. The encounter is cyclical. They desire, they search, they meet and then they separate again, only to re-enact the process again.

In Seal Upon Your Heart, the moment represented is the moment of the encounter of the lovers, the consummation of their love and desire for each other. The rings, having been cast when the lovers' hands were together, is the witness of the *instant* of the encounter. The rings exactly fit, they are *aligned*. Seal Upon Your Heart is the image of the hierogamic moment.

My work results from a mosaic of influences which range from commentary on alchemy to specific aspects of science – particularly optics and astronomy to elements of mythology and aspects of Egyptology. Writings of esoteric nature and the Hebraic tradition are also source of inspiration – poetic and vicarious – specifically and solely those of authors Alice Bailey and Annick de Souzenelle. The biblical text likewise offers insight into some of the issues raised in this thesis.

For Alice Bailey form is expression – is a result – of invisible forces that lie within it and which are ultimately responsible for its appearance. Humanity's task is to develop its awareness so as to eventually be able to consciously access those creative forces, get to know and work with them.

As such, the author examines the meaning lying behind phenomena. That is, her writings deal with the penetration into the significance aspect found within the world of external appearance. They consider the surfacing of the consciousness, of the Spirit, that struggles to emerge from within the tangible form. Naturally, symbology plays an important role in esoteric philosophy, a type of thinking in which alchemy is included. Being the symbol 'an outward and visible sign of an inward Spiritual reality' (Bailey, 1991: 285), symbology is the search for correspondences between meanings and significances, which lie *within* the form and thus struggle to emerge. It is a major influence in my work in the sense that it is a direct source of information and revelation. The concept of Spirituality used throughout this work coincides with Alice Bailey's definition: 'All activity which drives the human being forward towards some form of development – physical, emotional, mental, intuitional, social – if is in advance of his present state is essentially Spiritual in nature and is indicative of the livingness of the inner divine entity.' (Bailey, 1987a: 1). The notion 'Spiritual' is in here not attached to any religious or sectarian interpretation of the world, but is understood to be an inherent ontological condition shared by all humanity irrespective of belief or religious attachment. The thought is fundamental in this work, and it is from this perspective that the notion is used in this thesis.

Elements from the above areas of knowledge articulate themselves over the alchemical cosmology. As a *poetic construction* within a cosmology, the artwork does not attempt to represent 'a truth', or even 'the truth' of *that* cosmology, which in this case itself cannot

claim scientific nor philosophical veracity. On the contrary, being *poetic* it necessarily reflects a quality of subjective nature. Poetry does not show *the* truth but *a* truth – its own.

All inspirational sources are considered with equal value for their motivational capabilities. The influences in the artwork being all part of a wide and eclectic cultural landscape, naturally include diverse aspects of that culture – no conflict however arises in the association of the disparate influences because they all are considered as fundamentally poetic influences.

The way in which and why in the artwork these aspects can be placed side-by-side in a harmonious creative relationship is through the use of ‘poetic logic’, used throughout this work as the methodology of the revelation of the artwork.

Alchemy is in this work both inspirational source and methodological process. Being already a system, it immediately offers a structure upon which the poetic, the subjective, can be constructed. Therefore, the bases of alchemy are used in order to interpret the enquiry, to place it in context and to be able to reach the conclusion, i.e., the artwork.²

Two aspects in particular of the alchemical philosophy are illustrative of its parallel with my work. On the one hand this cosmology assumes the return to the unified cosmos as a journey towards the lover, towards the Self. This exactly fits the theme around which this research moves. On the other hand, given the microcosm / macrocosm relation in alchemical thinking (in which the material and the Spiritual reflect each other in a relationship of correspondence) the artwork here understood as *image* directly connects it with the system’s philosophy. This is because the ‘image’ assumes the existence *elsewhere* of the thing it represents, of which it is, albeit intimately connect, only an incomplete representation.

Specific aspects of the work of two artists are considered in this research, namely filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky and visual artist James Lee Byars.

² It must be noted that I am not dealing with the alchemical texts themselves but with their exegesis, that is, with interpretative writing on the primary sources. Therefore the artwork (the ‘poetry’) is constructed from within an already intellectualised understanding of the philosophy.

Andrei Tarkovsky is significant for this research through his film Nostalgia (1987), a film which, from a diaristic point of view, helped to ‘unlock’ an object and a theme in this research. He is discussed here as inspiration for articulating poetic logic as the creative process in the production of the artwork. Tarkovsky is also significant because of the overarching theme in his work: the ontological search, a journey which all the protagonists in his films undergo.

In the construction of the artwork, ‘poetic logic’ is the main methodological tool utilized. ‘Poetic logic’ is a type of thinking that creates by *verisimilitude*, a relationship between apparently disparate elements that are made to connect resulting in a new found ‘truth’ or reality – the artwork itself. Creation by verisimilitude is therefore that which is capable of finding in initially unrelated elements specific aspects which resonate semantically binding them later into a unified coherent idiosyncratic whole. In this case the artwork. This is done by semantic association, be it notional or imagetic.

Significantly, alchemy’s logic in making the assumption of an essential link between the intelligible model and its visible representation does so by using the analogical argument, that is, the vindication that the explanation of one phenomenon is valid for another with which the first maintains relations of similarity. This means, things connecting on the level of their semantics – significance and meaning.

James Lee Byars’ work is discussed here with regard to the way in which it deals with the teleological, particularly in his work associated with ‘beauty’ and ‘perfection’. His defence of art as not purely object or material manifestation – but as image – and his use of gold will be considered. And lastly his predilection for framing the work of art as an immaterial, ephemeral, sometimes even unnoticeable, action.

For the sake of clarification, the way the thinking and the construction of the artwork is structured can be represented into a diagram (Figure 1), albeit suffering from the inadequacy and generalisation diagrams contain:

There is the underlying, pervading substratum – the alchemical cosmology. This is the suggested, implied view of the world – it is the axiom from which the research springs.

Extending from this proposition is the mystical, the esoteric, the mythical, and the legendary writing from where I take the suggestion of how things (can) exist in the world. From here inspiration in the form of images, descriptions, 'events' or 'occurrences' is found.

Aspects from more orthodox areas of knowledge (as modern science) are addressed, specially in response to specific issues raised by esoteric writing.

Life's experience is, as it were, the personal filter of synthesis of the world. It determines the particular way in which that same world is perceived and therefore colours and influences the thinking and the production of the artwork.

Symbology, being the perspective from which the specific *form* of the artwork is found, impregnates the whole process. It should be regarded as a membrane of signification that envelops the whole process.

The artwork is the result of the synergetic combination of the above. As such, it is the idiosyncratic product of their thematic, conceptual, and poetic relationship. Crucially, it is also the result of a heuristic experience.

The diagram should be read as performing two essential movements. One horizontal that brings elements together, and another vertical, that 'elevates' them. This constitutes a development *within* and *upwards*. The product of this rapport constitutes the artwork.

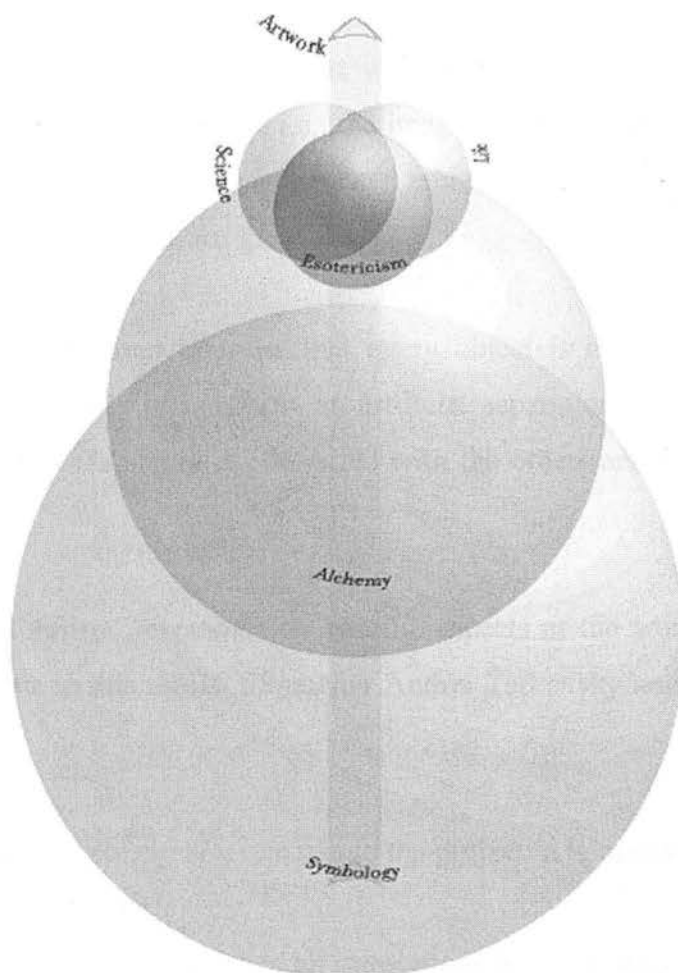


Figure 1. Conceptual structuring of the thesis.

This dissertation presents an examination of this thesis' creative process structured as follows:

Chapter 2 'Methods and Processes' will deal with the methods and processes used throughout this research. Poetic logic is here analysed in relation to the conception of the artwork. This is followed by an historical overview of the unfolding of the artwork, taking into consideration the tergiversation of the personal artistic practice with research themes and creative methods. An outline of the principles of the alchemical thinking ensues, in order to set the way to the understanding of the philosophical aspects contained in this research and used throughout. Finally, the notion of image and symbol will be considered in relation to the creative process used in the production of the material for this thesis.

Chapter 3, 4, and 5 consider the pieces Aveo Amor, Seal Upon Your Heart, and Saudade for the Future respectively. They all start with a detailed description of each object followed by the 'Foundational image', i.e., the image or thought that lies at the origin of the object. Subsequent sections discuss related areas of knowledge and culture that are an informational source material for the work.

These chapters are structured in order that every object is considered independently, whilst recognising that this is somehow an artificial separation. Through their shared problematic each object is naturally connected with the others and the space at Gosford House.

Chapter 6 'Related Artists', expounds on specific aspects of the work of the influential and contextual artists in this thesis, filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky and visual artist James Lee Byars.

This will be followed by concluding remarks to the project in 'Conclusion'.

Some of the literary investigation relies on translations done by me. This refers to every case of the use of texts in Portuguese and French as detailed in the Bibliography.

Chapter 2: Methods and Processes

This section deals with the methods and processes used to arrive at the artworks as they appear in this project. I will start by offering a global overview of the methods relevant to this research and then proceed to a more detailed analysis.

In overall terms, the artwork is the outcome of a tergiversating mélange between idiosyncratic natural tendencies, that is, personal thematic interests and world vision, and experiences that life itself suggests.

In order to take the artwork to its final stage, a number of issues have been deliberated upon. These are considerations on the objects themselves, as well as on objects in connection with each other. Additionally, the relationship of these works with the space where they are exhibited is also considered. I have searched for a suitable fit between the form and the idea, the artwork therefore being the intersection of both, which establishes a syncretic relationship. Each resulting form is imbued with a meaning or a level of meanings. This relationship implies a confluence between my world vision, in the form of a personal position, and my desire to 'say something' and hence share it with an audience.

From a practical point of view, the pieces have undergone several 'incarnations', until after a series of technical experiments and thematic reflections, the artwork in its final form unfolds.

From conception, the concept of symbol is fundamental. Likewise the use of specific materials and their associated symbology is paramount in the decisions made. During the process of conceptually arriving at the artwork I take influence from culture, namely aspects of esoteric thinking as presented by Alice Bailey and alchemy, elements of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and features of myth. Influences from other artists naturally also find their way into the creative process, as well as circumstances or experiences stemming directly from my life.

When conceiving the artwork I search in various cultural expressions for connections to what is happening in the studio. These offer a kind of semantic clarification and

sometimes even a certain 'confirmation' of previously 'intuited' ideas, which find their way into the artwork. Furthermore, they proffer and reveal a certain poetic depth to the work either in the process of being produced or already understood to being concluded. It is therefore not without surprise that occasionally, after the work is finished, parallels with aspects of those traditions are found. As if by some sort of magical touch they 'slot in' in an agreeable, sympathetic, manner with what has been produced in the studio. This helps to clarify and nurture the thinking about the work, furthering it or offering it an enlarged envelope of meaning. However, being not determinant in the conception of the pieces, which stem from direct life situations or thoughts on those occurrences, they are capable of mirroring some of the elements in the artwork. Therefore, these diverse expressions situate the work in a cultural context from which the work stems in a more or less conscious manner, and against which it can later be set against in terms of coming up with a 'perspectival' – that is, speculative – reasoning.

The conception of the artwork is aided by confrontation with other artists' poetic disquietudes, themes and, of course, artistic solutions.

Underlining the artwork and its conception is the esoteric philosophy of alchemy. Alchemy constitutes an inspirational source not as an intensive study of its premises and intricacies but instead I take inspiration from its general principles, that is, its philosophical outline.

In this research, the alchemical canon offers the principles conceptually and formally enacted by the pieces (consciously or unconsciously deployed during its production) and hence the understanding of it as method used in the production of the artwork. Of relevance here is the symbol's centrality in alchemy, which is also the case in this research. But also the type of analogical thinking that characterises the alchemical *modus operandi* and which is used throughout this research.

The artwork therefore stands at the syncretic confluence of the above.

2.1 Poetic logic

The initial idea for a piece of artwork sometimes stems from a mental picture (something as a 'revelation') or can conversely be purposefully looked for. However, more often than not, usually what happens is that the 'vision' appears first and then specific solutions which will shape the piece are looked for using a discursive process. Regardless, it is often the case – and this is particularly true of the pieces for this research – that the artwork first appears as an emotion stemming from lived experience. This is how it first 'surfaces', as a *sentiment*, of which there is no clear defined object to visualise. Hence an effort to envisage a possible form that is able to give shape to the sentiment is made. Consequently I go searching for forms and enactments in the world – in culture and traditions – and in the experience of my life that resonate with the initial, generative emotion.

This search is made using 'poetic logic'. Poetic logic conceives a network of meanings that during the creative process are *distilled*, eventually producing the sculptural form, pregnant with the emotion and the concept that, in the mean time, has started to become clearer.

This is a type of reasoning that creates by *semantic resonance* and by *analogical association*. This means that things that at first appear to be non-associable (i.e. not sharing common ground) can actually contain threads of conceptual connection. These can be images, ideas, et cetera, that are found to share a common significance. For instance, the obscurity created by a cloud can discover an echo of imagetical and notional value with the darkness inside a closed mould. The association, which is analogical (establishes a comparison between one thing and another) is capable of instituting a functional connection between the elements – it extracts meaningful conclusions from the observation or definition of common points between distinct phenomena. (Riffard, 1997). On this level, entities create points of linkage and meaning slides effortlessly from one to another: the darkness inside the shut mould becomes *equivalent* to the shadow cast by the cloud. Semantic association and analogical thinking therefore define the underlying conception and appearance of the artwork.

Verisimilitude is the concept that best defines the principle. The word stems for the Latin *veri* (genitive of *verus* 'true') and *similes* 'like'. (Soanes: 1958). This means that things are 'like truth', they are a *proposal* for truth. But what, in this reasoning is 'true'? On the

one hand, the similarity itself – that things indeed contain elements of resemblance first, hidden and later revealed by the association. But more significantly, that the establishing or finding of this similarity creates something that is true in itself. The new found ‘truth’, or the proposed ‘truth’ – in this context the artwork – acquires an ontological legitimacy when, before the establishment of the link, there might have been none. For instance, a sameness that is created in saying that the horn and the star share qualities that set them in a relationship of a proposed sameness – that the horn, being helical, *is* a beam of light because light moves in helices. Or even the thinking enacted in associating gold with sunlight, once the metal, when highly polished, is capable of reflecting back almost the totality of the light projected into it. It then can be understood to *be* itself a source of light or light *itself*. Yet another instance is the chromatic analogy between the red bole (used as cushion for the gold in the gilding process, hence lying *underneath* the metallic surface) and the colour of the blood running *inside* the human body. These examples enable a poetic step created by verisimilitude.

The resulting piece of artwork is therefore the outcome of a process of searching, where several ideas are pondered and tested. Hence, from the onset of this research I had a desire to enquire about the representational issues revolving around the concept of the loving, erotic touch. This had already been an earlier concern of mine, and which gave origin to pieces produced and displayed earlier in my activity as an artist. Through These Things are Performed the Miracle of One Thing Only (1998), Extension of the Many Above (1998), Let Him Kiss Me With the Kisses of His Mouth (1998).³

³ The first piece consisting on a glass platform sustained by four gilded legs upon which a couple made love, the imprints of their skins left as marks on the glass surface. The second presenting the casting of two ring fingers of lovers and cast fused together in gold. (Further details on this piece are considered in Chapter 4 Seal Upon Your Heart, ‘Foundational Image’). The third deploying a sugar cast form, which was passed between lovers’ mouths in a kiss.



Figure 2. *Through These Things are Performed the Miracle of One Thing Only* (1998), glass, gilded wood, skin oils, 210 x 130 x 80 cm, Gosford House, Edinburgh, 1998.



Figure 3. (detail) *Through These Things are Performed the Miracle of One Thing Only* (1998), glass, gilded wood, skin oils, 210 x 130 x 80 cm, Gosford House, Edinburgh, 1998.

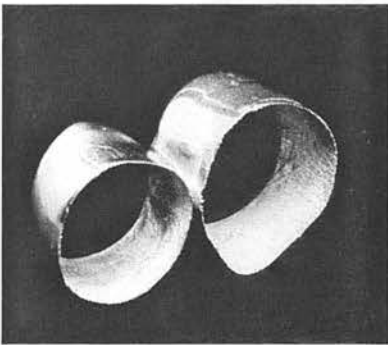


Figure 4. *Extension of the Many Above* (1998), 18 Carat gold, 3.4 x 2 x 1.1 cm, Gosford House, Edinburgh, 1998.

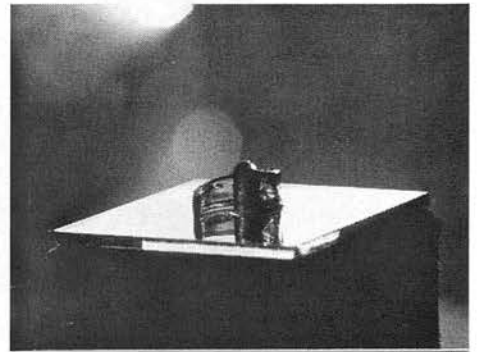


Figure 5. *Let Him Kiss Me With the Kisses of His Mouth* (1998), caramelised sugar, 2 x 1.2 x 1 cm, Gosford House, Edinburgh, 1998.

In relation to this research, several trials were made, which included the use of several materials and processes, all related with that wish to enact the erotic touch. Using rubber and fine casting plaster, several casts taken directly from the naked human body. Throughout the process however, it became clear that touch itself could not be represented. What I felt I was left with were 'empty shells' which eluded the *essence* of touch, how it really *felt* like. Once the representation evaded capture in form, I therefore embarked on a process of gradual abstracting representation. Eventually I aimed at an abstract depiction, a visualisation that still tried to keep the essence of what I wished to express.

There was, however, from the onset, the realisation that one way or another it was necessary to *unveil* something. That is, that touch itself was the disclosing of the emotion felt and likewise, that touch, to be represented required an *uncovering*. Also, the notion was present that touch was, in essence, a transforming experience to those, the lovers, who experienced it.

Therefore, the first 'finished' object was a pillow, woven of single unspun threads of raw silk.⁴ The hair removed from the human body in order to make the cast was used to fill the pillow.

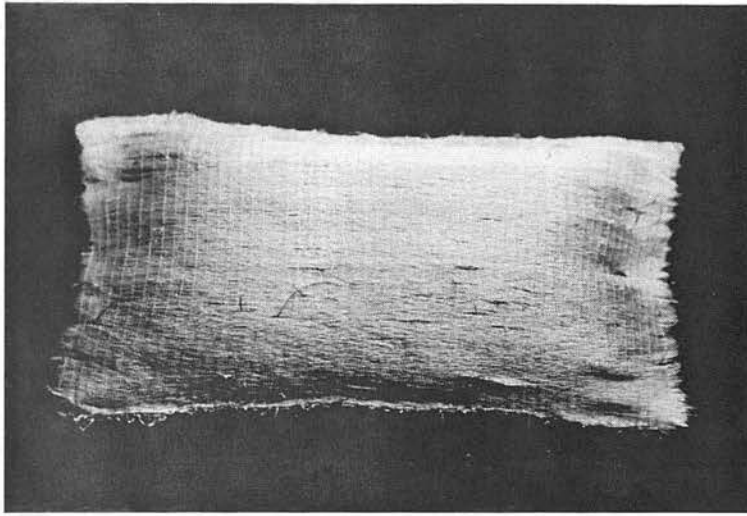


Figure 6. [*Pillow*] (2000), raw unspun silk, human hair, 7 x 3 x 1.2 cm.

The using of hair as an integral element of the piece stemmed from the casting technique itself. In order to cast the body, naturally covered in hairs, these had to be removed because I wished the detail of the skin, the pores, the fine lines, et cetera to be reproduced. The body was being *revealed* by removing what concealed its intimacy, the hair. The technique was therefore clearly exposing aspects related with the conception of the piece. And the material silk was symbolically suggesting the *transforming* capacity of erotic touch.

However the pillow was somehow moving away from the initial intention to represent the erotic touch. Here I wished the bodies *themselves* to be depicted. The development lines

⁴ The weaving was made using the entire length of one single cocoon, which was first soaked in warm water, then the thread found and the cocoon unspun. The weaving was made using the original thickness of the silk – just as the silkworm had created it.

that the woven object suggested were abandoned, albeit conceptual traces left behind, would be used later, particularly the use of silk to connote transmutation.

Henceforth I concentrated on casting lovers *touching*. A series of casts was made, namely in porcelain and fine casting plaster. Yet these also seemed to fail to represent the nature of touch. I therefore embarked on a journey of progressive abstracting, I thought better depicted the essence of the concept.

A pair of pieces, in turned mulberry wood (which came from the same place where I got the silk for the pillow) was made, a cylinder, and a sphere (figure 7 and 9). The cylinder had its knots removed and then it was covered with gold leaf. The sphere was likewise covered in gold leaf, however it had no knots but a small split on the wood.

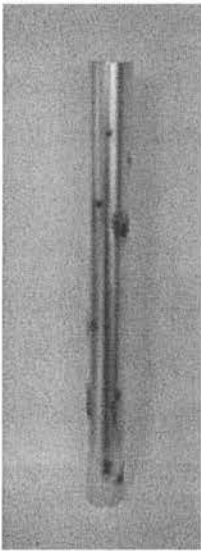


Figure 7. *[Cylinder]* (2003), white mulberry wood, gesso, yellow and red bole, gold leaf, 54.5 x 4.8 cm.

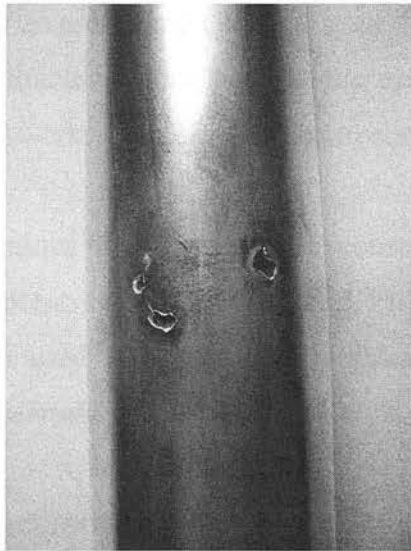


Figure 8. *[Cylinder]* (2003), white mulberry wood, gesso, yellow and red bole, gold leaf, 54.5 x 4.8 cm. (detail).

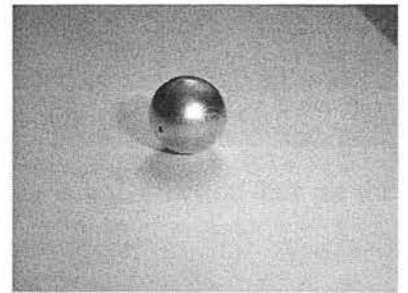


Figure 9. *[Sphere]* (2003), white mulberry wood, gesso, yellow and red bole, gold leaf, 1.1 cm.

Intending to represent the touch, the gold was rubbed off, by friction, in the exact places where the wood 'asked' to be touched or caressed: the emptied-out knots, and the fissure. Rubbing the gold off revealed the hidden layers of the object, the red bole underneath. This would later be used in the horn, caressed on its innermost, thus more intimate, folds. By caressing the gold's surface and exposing the *redness* underneath this poetically

(analogically) suggested the *rubescere*, the blushing, associated with the surfacing of the blood in the erotic, rubbing encounter.⁵

However, it was the *effect* of touch that once more became represented. It was from this stage onwards that the journey towards the abstract, conceptual touch between the horn and the star ensued. This abstracting was to become the *inactual* touch between the two elements and was also indicated by the materials used. Resorting to the use of gold resolved the aspect of the *unrepresentability* of the touch, by being itself a material that suggests ineffability. (Didi-Huberman, 1995; Janes, 1998). Gold is also related to the fact that the pieces are considered to be images. (I will return to this issue later.)

The themes of the research were already present from its onset, even though they only became fully apparent after time and internal deliberation: transmutation, revelation of the veiled, touch as product of an erotic impulse, that is, as a result of the attractive action of Eros. The resulting exhibited artwork here is the epitome and distillation of ideas enacted, tried out in earlier works, henceforth taken to completion as the final artwork.

The main sculptural technique employed in the construction of the final artwork is essentially the casting process. Carving was used in one specific instance and gold leafing / gold plating was used throughout the work not as a construction but as the conceptual *epidermis* of the work.

Casting was used in the production of the horn (Aveo Amor) and the rings (Seal Upon Your Heart). In the first case, casting was used to give origin to the final object, the horn. A plaster mould was taken from a model in the same material, and then cast in *jesmonite*, a gypsum based material in an acrylic resin envelope. In the second case, a cast in high definition rubber was first taken to make an impression directly from the human flesh, and then from this initial cast, following a process of consecutive reversals, arrived at the final cast in wax, later cast into silver.⁶

⁵ 'To rub' comes from German *rubben* (Soanes: 1539), and shows no etymological connection with *rubescere* ('to blush') (Traupman, 1995). One of the connections here being established is the poetic association allowed by the type of logic as methodological premise in this research. The other relationship is the association between rubbing and exposing a redness underneath the gold's surface and the rubescent effect of rubbing the human flesh.

⁶ For details on the sculptural processes and materials used throughout, see Appendix E 'Construction of the Artwork – horn, rings, buttons'.

Carving was used as the initial technique in the making of the horn – the original model, having been sculpted directly in plaster. The carved object has therefore, somehow disappeared, having been ‘absorbed’ into the mould and in the process, reversed.

Gilding was another technique employed, namely to cover the cast horn and also to cover elements in the appropriated piece, the dress’ buttons in Saudade for the Future. In Seal Upon Your Heart the rings were gold-plated. In principle, however, the plating is akin to the covering with leaf. In both cases the outer surface of the piece becomes a surface of gold.

Therefore, Seal Upon Your Heart is a piece made in its totality from casting, Aveo Amor a mix of carving and casting, and the dress in Saudade for the Future, from a technical point of view, merely had its buttons covered in precious metal.

Casting, as the major technique here employed, conceptually suits the concerns underlying the artwork. The technique is a convergence and interplay of ‘bodies’, of physicalities, that are generators of other forms. Casting is a *creative process* that brings into a defined, ‘hardened’ shape, materials amorphous at the onset of the process – liquid plaster, silver, and wax, gelatinous rubber. This generative quality is of interest from both a mechanical perspective and a philosophical point of view.

The artworks having their origin in my natural poetic inclination (in terms of themes and creative methods) and also in my sense of existence and belonging in the world, also finds inspiration from aspects of culture. As the studio work progressed I was reading on subjects of interest, such as esoteric literature, Judeo-Christian exegesis of the biblical text, looking at general religious iconography, and examining works by other artists. These would occasionally be balanced with aspects stemming from science. My life experience also contributed to the production of the artwork. Namely the dress in Saudade for the Future is taken directly from my life, and the initial reasons for its choice stem from an unorthodox encounter. The rings are cast from an actual amorous relationship and attempt at depicting the feel of that touch and its transformative capacities.

In my search I was aided by two artists, Andrei Tarkovsky and James Lee Byars. Their work and thinking, have, in a various forms, grounded and contextualised my poetic quest, at the same time, in different ways, have oriented some of my concerns. Aspects of their artistic themes, processes and disquietudes have been inspirational source. They have helped to clarify and illustrate my own work. A kind of reverberation between my work and theirs has been explored. From a methodological perspective, they serve as resonating platforms and they place my work and working methods in a wider artistic context.

In brief, the artwork starts to take form in the studio: form and idea, and emotion and intent intertwine, along with on occasion unexpected lines of development that the work starts to reveal. Subsequently, in assorted and eclectic aspects of culture, I find a kind of *poetic resonance* with what has been produced or is in the process of being created. It is this tergiversating combination that methodologically gives origin to the artwork, from its beginnings to its resolution as presented in the exhibition space.

2.2 The philosophy of alchemy

The artwork's underlying philosophical framework is a general outline of alchemy's cosmology. Merely its global principles will be considered in relation to this research. Hence, this text will not dwell on the intricacies that the tradition proposes. It is from a globalising structure that inspiration for the conception and reasoning that gave origin to the artwork has been taken. Fundamentally, it happened that I would realise, mostly after the artwork being started that what it was enacting fitted the tradition's principles. The artwork did not set out to 'illustrate' the philosophy – the correspondences happened intuitively.

I repeat here that my use of alchemy is not experimental, that is, it is not based on experience and practice but is fundamentally vicarious. It nevertheless makes philosophical sense to me – it is somehow inescapable that when one creates a piece of work, fidelity with regard to one's position is enacted. The film director Nicolas Roeg speaking on his film Don't Look Now (1973) admits: 'If there is any truth to it [the artwork], it's because you've put something of yourself on to the [piece].' (O'Hagan: 6).

I am here dealing with 'Spiritual alchemy', that is, alchemy understood from the point of view of the each person being in essence a Spiritual creature and his/her life being the enactment of the intrinsic divine essence.

Henceforth when referring to 'alchemy' what is meant is 'Spiritual alchemy', that is, an ontological transmutational process 'whereby man's leaden dull nature is returned to its golden original state.' (Burckhardt, 1997: 3). Alchemical thinking and the type of esotericism here considered (Alice Bailey's interpretation) have in common the sense of human life as a process of Spiritual development with the eventual encounter with the 'true nature'. (van den Broek, 1990). As fundamentally Spiritual in principle, they both propose life as essentially an endeavour of ontological metamorphosis of the subject into his/her very being, in order to achieve the philosopher's stone (alchemy) and the 'Spiritual alignment' (Bailey's esotericism). Frequently the two philosophies will be used in this text interchangeably.

Alchemy, being essentially esoteric in nature, is concerned with the awareness of an essential 'inner divine entity' (Bailey, 1987: 1). 'Esotericism really is training in the ability to function freely in the world of meaning...it is occupied with ... the mediating principle between life and substance ... [it] involves a life lived in tune with the inner subjective realities.' (Bailey, 1987: 66-67).

In fact, the worldview which produced the particular corpus of material here referred as 'Spiritual alchemy' was that of esotericism. Antoine Faivre (van der Broek, 1998) proposes the simultaneous presence of four 'intrinsic' characteristics in the identification of esotericism, which can likewise be found in alchemical thought. Succinctly put, the first is that of the principle of correspondences, which states that all things in the universe are interconnected. The concept that there is a correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm is an aspect of this. Hence everything, in one way or another, influences and is influenced by every other thing: the experiments in the laboratory, so-called 'chemical experiments', mirror and assist in the Spiritual process, therefore any activity undertaken in the phenomenal world directly connects and has an effect in the macrocosmic world.

The second aspect, the concept of 'living nature', proposes nature understood as dynamic, multi-leveled, and multivalent. Therefore, everything in nature is potentially an epiphanic sign, that is, the manifestation of the divinity in every form. This is what is understood to be the concept of 'god immanent' in Creation.

Thirdly, that everything in the manifested universe is interconnected by the agency of things that intrinsically possess a mediating character. This is done by means of divinities such as Eros or Love, considering that they are able to have access to both worlds – the macrocosm and the microcosm – and hence are able to act as intermediaries between both. Angels, for instance, are understood to be able to perform this transference of influence. This can also be done by the means of things within which the mediating quality is naturally instilled – images, symbols, rituals, et cetera.

The fourth aspect is named 'transmutation', i.e., the *ontological* conversion of the subject in his/her essential nature. It is this concept that is understood to have a direct bearing on the concept of alchemy as a Spiritual activity.

The cosmology of alchemy presupposes an initial ontological separation of a primordial unity, which gives origin to the fundamental duality in the manifested world: the macrocosm, which stands for the world of principles, and the microcosm, epitomised by the human being. (Burckhardt, 1997). However, division does not indicate separation. The singular cosmos having been divided, still maintains an essential natural rapport between its two parts. This is due to the fact that the doctrine of analogies and correspondences in esotericism states that the 'whole' is *one*, thus *inseparable*. (Riffard, 1987). That is, the 'whole' is not 'one' numerically, but 'one' in its *indivisibility*. In this way it is entirely present in each individual, which, symmetrically, mirrors it. Hence humanity finds itself inescapably connected to its universal counterpart. Alchemy conceives a distinction between the two, but not an ontological separation. This is how they manage to reflect and have an effect in each other.

This separation gives origin to the polarities in the world. It is therefore understood that before the initial split there was no differentiation between Spirit and matter – both existed in a state of undifferentiation (the primordial *one*). The original split is associated with a 'fall' from that state of single divine harmony. (Chevalier, 1996). This is equated with

the biblical paradise, where man and woman, after having been created, and where lived in a state of 'bliss', are expelled from the Garden of Eden. Human existence (outside paradise) is understood by alchemy and esotericism alike to be the necessary experiencing of the world – and fundamentally of *oneself in the world* – in order to regain that initial state of bliss and perfection and hence return to the lost paradise. This equates to a regressive utopia that is also progressive (since it presupposes a perfecting yet to be undertaken) in which the search is for something that has been lost in the 'past' but is able to be regained in the 'future'. (Delumeau, 1995). For the path to be trodden, the notion of being 'separated' from the essential ontological wholeness has to be recognised, that is, brought to conscious awareness. (Bailey, 1991).

Therefore, exiled in the world of phenomenon, the being keeps an essential inexorable connection with the Spirit. Alchemically speaking, the person finds him or herself split into masculine and feminine poles, that are inherent in his/her Soul, and which reproduce the essential sexual duality (active and passive, male and female) in the manifested universe. The Soul is, Burckhardt says, the *materia prima* 'regarded as both the primary substance of the world and the basic substance of the Soul [of man]' (Burckhardt, 1997: 103).

In the western alchemical tradition⁷ as described by the author, the feminine pole is called 'quicksilver' and the masculine 'sulphur'. These 'are mutually complementary ... and can be related to the two poles [in the universe]... as relative reflections of each other.' (Burckhardt, 1997: 123).

It is the alchemist's life's task to blend these two natures within him or herself and eventually achieve their resolution in the form of the Philosopher's Stone, the *lapis*, that is, the 'Spiritual gold', the result of their 'sexual' encounter, which is generative.

'Generation only takes place when the properties of Sulphur and Quicksilver mutually penetrate each other.' (Burckhardt, 1997: 127). It is hence a *creational* process that produces a 'practical', even though because of essentially Spiritual nature, *invisible* result – the *hierosgamos*, Greek for 'sacred marriage'. This creative aspect of the pair of

⁷ There are several alchemical traditions spanning several cultures and centuries. However, a 'principle of unity' runs throughout. 'In its essentials, Indian alchemy is the same as Western, and Chinese alchemy, though set in a completely different Spiritual climate.' (Burckhardt, 1997: 8). In this research mainly the Western tradition, thought to have its origin in the ancient Egyptian priestly art is being considered.

principium opposites (as masculine and feminine, as light and shadow, as man and woman) has great importance in the development and considerations about the artwork.

Therefore, the union between the antithetical, conflicting principles, resolved in the *lapis vivus* (Latin for 'living stone') is ultimately the *telos* (Greek for 'aim' and 'end accomplished' (Liddell: 697), hence 'teleology', the study of the ultimate causes in nature, and any activity that tends towards the achievement of a goal, in this case, the Spirit, the essence) as the aim of the process. The notion of arrival at the 'end' naturally assumes the aim and the progress towards it.

Life is therefore the enactment of a process of *return* to the essential ontological wholeness, the *hierosgamos*. Thus this process is a journey of ontological *revelation* (Burckhardt, 1997), because it is the encounter of the nature of the being, previously inaccessible to human consciousness in its full magnificence. Alchemically, it corresponds to a process of *purification* of the material nature. The latter 'has to be purified, dissolved, and crystallized anew.' (Burckhardt, 1997: 27). The goal of alchemy is to find the expression of the Spirit, which is *without form*, therefore without the body. This body, always as a reflection of the Spirit, is 'fragmentary and in a sense 'congealed', so preventing it from mirroring the [Spirit] freely and without distortion.' (Burckhardt, 1997: 72). The alchemical process is therefore understood to perform the soteriological task – the Christian 'salvation' – of redeeming material nature and hence bringing about the *effective* realisation of the full glory of the divine in humanity, that is, its Spiritual essence. (Eliade, 1971).

There exists a parallel here with Bailey's esoteric thought, who uses the word 'redemption' and mentions the 'salvaging' of substance when referring to the esoteric Spiritualising task of "bringing down to earth" those energies which emanate from the highest sources and then "grounding them" or anchoring them.' (Bailey, 1987: 67).

The Spirit or essential nature of the being is understood to *reside within* him or her. The journey towards the ontological essence is well expressed by the alchemical keyword V.I.T.R.I.O.L., which is interpreted as "*Visita Interiora Terrae; Reificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem*" (visit the interior of the earth; through purification thou wilt find the hidden stone), the interior of the earth hence is made to correspond to the interior of the

body, namely, the inward, undifferentiated state of consciousness.’ (Burckhardt, 1997: 101). The hidden stone, which ‘shines as gold’ (Burckhardt, 1997: 101), is the living luminous *lapis*, the essence, that is revealed at the hierogamic moment. Later in the text Burckhardt expands, the search for his/her real nature is a journey that enacts ‘a vibration coming from the centre of the being. [It is] a Spiritual act ... which on the plane of the Soul effects two things: a broadening and a deepening of the ‘sense of being’, and a clarification and a stabilization of the essential contents of consciousness.’ (Burckhardt, 1997: 125). This notion of the ‘truth within’ is instrumental in the conception of the artwork, and is specially enacted in the piece Saudade for the Future and also finds echoes in considerations on the casting process.

The principle of analogy and correspondence is paramount in alchemical thinking. It is clearly enounced in the famous alchemical dictum ‘whatever is below is like that which is above, and whatever is above is like that which is below’, written in the *Tabula Smaragdina*, or ‘Emerald Table’.⁸ This ‘mirror-correspondence’ is what on the one hand is characterised as the intimate interconnectedness between the macrocosm and the microcosm. And also proposes that one element in nature has the capability of correlating with another in it, provided that a same essence is shared between the two aspects. For instance, the sun and gold are believed to share the same essential core - hence their association, which runs throughout the tradition. This corresponds, as seen above in the text, to what Faivre identifies as the ‘first’ of the four intrinsic defining characteristics of the alchemical thought: the doctrine of correspondences.

It is from this standpoint that an analogy of symbolic reciprocity is possible to find between ‘the lovers’ and ‘the being and the essential nature’ as identified and mentioned all through this thesis.

Sulphur as the masculine pole (active, hot and dry), and quicksilver (passive, cold and wet) as the feminine, establish, by means of the doctrine of correspondences, a connection in principle with ‘man’ and ‘woman’. Both forces, antithetical and complementary in principle, are attracted to each other and hence mingle their natures with a generative

⁸ The ‘Emerald Table’ is said to contain the meaning and structure of alchemy and hermetic thought. It is believed to be a revelation of Hermes Trismegistus, (the thrice-great Hermes) identifiable as the Egyptian god Thoth, who is believed to be the mythical founder of the alchemical tradition with its origins in Ancient Egypt. It is understood to be at the origin to the whole western alchemical tradition, including Greek and Arab, and from these to medieval Europe and ramifications which ensued. (Burckhardt, 1997).

outcome, the *hierosgamos*. Burckhardt states: 'The relation of the two primordial forces to each other is thus similar to that of man and woman in sexual union'. (Burckhardt, 1997: 124). From an ontological perspective, both are also considered to be one within the other – as the active pole is understood to be contained inside the passive and vice-versa. One lover says of the other 'you are inside me'; likewise, the being is in this research (mirroring the alchemical cosmology) understood to carry within itself its ontological truth.

There is therefore an equation, both 'principal' [principle] and ontological, between the lovers and the being and its essential nature. This equation is used throughout the project and enacted in the sculptural works made.

2.3 Image

In the world of representation, that is, of phenomenon, the image establishes a relation of resemblance with the thing it intends to represent. It is *re-presentation* exactly because it 'presents-again'. 'Presence' defines 'the state or fact of existing, of being present'. (Soanes: 1391). The word comes from the Latin *praesentia* 'present in person' from the verb *praeseri*, from *prae* 'before, in advance of' and *esse* from *sum* 'to be, exist, live'. (Lewis: 284, 642,826). Hence, 'presence' in fact indicates that which 'exists before or in advance'. The image as re-presentation therefore presents-again that which *precedes* it – chronologically or in principle.

With regard to the philosophy here considered, the represented image (rather than the thing itself) can be made to correspond to the microcosm. That is, to the world of the myriad of representations that emanates from the world of prototypes. As the image of the 'holy face' of Christ, for instance, can have many representations, yet that which exists first, in *principal* [principle] advance, is Christ's face as prototype.

As defined by Gilbert Durand (2000: 7), an image is an '*indirect perception*' that consciousness has of the world. The direct perception being when the thing itself is concretely present 'in flesh and bone', as in direct sensitivity. Here the significance of the thing represented is completely enclosed by its presentational aspect hence 'ending' in

that same presentation. Image, as indirect perception, conversely, reveals that that which is accessible to the senses is essentially *not present*: 'the absent object is represented in the mind by an image.' (Durand, 1993: 7). The thing itself is not there, but elsewhere, of which the presented thing is a (necessarily incomplete) reflection. In the same context, according to alchemical cosmology, the Spirit is formless. When it is represented in the phenomenological world, it becomes flesh, i.e., 'crystallised Spirit'. This crystallisation gives the formless a defined, contained form. The representation, as form, keeps its essential connection with the formlessness which has given origin to it, but merely as reflection with multiple possible aspects. In the example above, there are innumerable representations of the face of Christ, but there is 'one' prototype of the face, of which every pictorial representation is an (interpretative) reflection.

Didi-Huberman goes further: the image is 'something that [attempts] to draw the gaze beyond the eye, the visible beyond itself, into the ... admirable regions of the imaginary ... It is not reduced to narrating a *storia* or of composing an imitation ... In the image, equivocation and the multiplicity of meanings predominate.' (Didi-Huberman 1995: 4, 26-27).

The artwork presented in this thesis is conceptually conceived as an image. The former stands for meanings, significances and principles of which it is only a possible representational suggestion. As will be seen in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 each piece enacts a 'narrative'. Therefore, the artwork being considered as an image, each 'action' performed by each of the pieces is accordingly not a *storia* nor an *imitation* of natural processes, to borrow Didi-Huberman's expressions. Instead, they endeavour to evoke in the imagination of those who see it, a fundamental quality inherent in those acts, an essential narrative existing *elsewhere*, that is, prototypical and hence capable of relating with each member of the audience in a specific way particular to him or her.

The use of gold is an iconographical stratagem here used to precisely indicate that the thing being looked at is an image.

2.4 Symbol

The concept of symbol is paramount in alchemical and esoteric thinking, and is widely used in the conception of the artwork and its analysis. Below I will expound on aspects of its philosophical implications.

The symbol is a specific type of image. The image, as just seen, stands for the representation of an absent object. According to Durand (2000) there are several 'degrees' of image. The image can be an exact copy of the sensation or only signal it. The notion of image ranges from a total adequateness in depicting a perceived presence or can remain eternally widowed of signification. The latter corresponds to the symbol.

In the introduction to his book on symbols, unfortunately untranslated to English, Chevalier (1989) explains what is understood by 'symbolism'. According to the author, the word defines an aesthetic, philosophical, theological, or exegetical type of thought through which religious texts or works of art do not possess a literal or objective signification, and suggests a plethora of interpretative meanings. The concept is also used to designate the capacity an image or a reality has of serving as symbol. For instance, the symbolism of the moon envisages a general property that the moon has as a possible foundation for symbols – the crescent, the mirror, silver, woman, et cetera. In this example, the moon plays the role of the prototype, from which a myriad of symbolic images stem. In alchemy, Christianity or Judaism, symbolism defines the general conception that those traditions make of the symbol and its usage.

Symbolism's domain is the non-sensible in all its aspects. 'The symbol stands for everything that is absent and impossible to understand' (Durand, 2000: 11). The nature of this *absence* is the subject of metaphysics, or religion, and of art.

The nature of the symbol itself is essentially that of an object cut in two. The symbol separates and joins together. It comprises both notions of separation and reunion. It 'evokes a communality which has been divided and is able to reform itself. Every symbol carries a sense of *broken sign*; the meaning of the symbol is discovered in that which is simultaneously breakage and bond of its estranged parts.' (Chevalier, 1989: xiii). This corresponds to the ontological premise enacted in the artwork – the search for the form and the meaning to which it is essentially connected.

The etymological definition and philology of the word enables the understanding of its meaning. The word 'symbol' comes originally from the Greek *sumballein* and also finds connections with *sumbolon*. René Alleau in his book *The science of symbols* (2001) expounds on the significance of the words. 'The concrete, natural and dynamic meaning of the verb [*sumballein*] ... evokes a movement that "joins"... and "gathers" elements previously separated ... [It also] refers to the consequences of that action, that is, to the *mutual connection* of the *reunited* parts. In fact, the verb *sumballein* first indicates a *transitive* use: "to throw or link together, to join things". [From] that, "to bring en masse", "to gather, to approach" and, by extension, "to exchange words with somebody" ... From this transitive sense [its meaning slides into] "to compare" one thing or a person with another, and from here to "to conjecture", "to interpret" ... For example, in Cratylus, Plato uses: *sumballein kresmon*, meaning "to interpret an oracle." From here *sumballein* changes into *sumbolon* as "sign of recognition", referring to the meaning of the object split into two, and hence refers to the reunion of the two parts ... [This word] is applied to a convention which identifies a mutual link through the reunion of the parts that naturally communicate between themselves. This *synthematic*⁹ aspect is accompanied by a properly *symbolic* aspect, in that it is not applicable only to an object ... but designates that which allows subjects to gather around the sign of a *belief* or a *value* [that is, eminently] a *sacred alliance* or considered as such.' (Alleau, 2001: 29-32).

From all of the above it is clear the essentially dynamic and open, and dialectical character of the symbol.

The symbol, as well as the image, is defined by its mediating character. It is enabled by Faivre's 'third principle', that of images containing a fundamental quality that is capable of revealing a *meaning* (equated with the infinite – the invisible part of the symbol) which

⁹ This is a brief elucidation on the word 'synthem' and also a placing in contradistinction with 'symbol'. It also serves to clarify the sentence in the main body of the text. The term 'synthem' was devised by René Alleau in his book *De la nature des symboles*, first published in 1958. It stems from the Greek word *suntēma*, in Latin *synthema*, meaning 'mutual bond'. The author establishes a fundamental difference between the 'symbol' and the 'synthem'. He proposes the synthem as an image which designates 'a socialised symbol, half sign, half symbol' (2001: 49). Elsewhere (Alleau, 1997) he has written: 'A synthem is founded on the understanding of the signification it transmits and on the deciphering of the enigma it proposes to the [human] mind, and which allows communication [between people] ... [That is,] the synthem possesses a static character, its crystallisation having been fixed by its use.' (Alleau, 1997: 26). One example can be the Christian cross or the English rose. Conversely, the symbol contains an 'essentially dynamic character', *unarrestable* in definitions or by conventions, whereas the synthem allows a 'logical description, and it is intellectually and rationally analysable.' (Alleau, 1997: 32-33). These considerations are relevant in the definition of an essential quality of *freedom* the symbol enacts (denied by the synthem) and which will be considered further down the main text.

they are understood to carry within their *form* (the finite – the symbol's visible aspect). The symbol is an 'infinity in the finite' (Durand, 2000: 12) in that it joins the visible half (the signifier) with its invisible part (the signified). Access to its significance and meaning is made through the use of imagination, an essentially revelatory, thus creative, activity. (van der Broek, 1998).

For the sake of clarifying this exposition, it may be helpful to compare briefly symbol and sign. The symbol is essentially distinct from the sign, in that the latter is an arbitrary convention that maintains a separation between the signified and the signifier. It does not go beyond the level of signification, that is, 'it simply denounces the presence of that which it represents, at the same time that it economically replaces an extensive conceptual definition.' (Durand, 2000: 8). Such is, for instance, the case of the white horizontal stripe over a red circular plaque to signify that one should not proceed, which makes it a sign of prohibition. The sign is therefore understood to be 'a means of economizing mental operations, and can be chosen arbitrarily.' (Durand, 2000: 8). In essence, there is nothing in the circle, in its red foundation and in the white band that *symbolically* resonates with a meaning of prohibition. One stops upon seeing it because one has learned and memorised its meaning.

Unlike the sign, the symbol presupposes a homogeneity between the signifier and the signified, in that it presupposes an 'organisational dynamism'. Gilbert Durand understands the expression as a faculty of the imagination, which he considers a 'factor of homogeneity in representation.' (Durand, 1963: 20). According to the author, the imagination, far from being a faculty of forming images, is the 'dynamic power that *deforms* the pragmatic copies supplied by perception ... [This] reformative dynamism of sensations becomes the foundation of the whole psychic life. [It is hence possible to say] that the symbol ... possesses more than an artificial given meaning [as does the sign. Conversely,] it holds an essential and spontaneous *stirring* and repercussive power.' (Durand, 1963:20-21).

In Gaston Bachelard's The Poetics of Space, quoted by Chevalier the point is made clear: "A rebounding force [*retentissement*] calls forth the deepening insight into [one's] own existence [in that] it operates a reversing [*virement*] in the being.'" (Chevalier, 1989: x). The symbol is therefore portrayed as the agency for novelty. It is not satisfied with

merely provoking resonances. It calls forth a revelation of the Spiritual depths of the being, and in doing so, it is transformative. Hence it explores inner aspects of the being in its attempt to express that which within him or her is invisible and ineffable. (Chevalier, 1989: x).

From an alchemical perspective, the discovery of the essential nature of the being is simultaneously a sort of 'remembering' (or *unveiling*, once the essence is understood to reside already within) and touch with the Soul of the world, which is, as referred above in the text, understood to be present in the being's own Soul. The use of the symbol, through the use of the imagination, has therefore the capacity to 'awaken' (in a process akin to a Spiritual anamnesis) the latent ontological fundament, and hence access to the latter is enabled.

In alchemy the symbol assists in the alchemist's task of self-discovery. It is there used as a platform for meditation, which has as its aim the revelation of essential processes in nature, mirrored by the alchemist's own ontological essence, fundamentally unspeakable. Burckhardt, voicing the alchemical perspective, develops this idea: 'A symbol is whatever, in the planes of the Soul ... reproduces Spiritual prototypes. In connection with this reflection of higher realities on lower planes, the imagination possesses a certain advantage over abstract thought. In the first place, it is capable of multiple interpretation; furthermore, it is not so schematic as abstract thought, and also, in so far as it 'condenses' itself into a pure image, it relies on the inverse correspondence that exists between the corporeal and Spiritual realms, according to the law that 'whatever is below resembles that which is above' as the 'Emerald Table' puts it ... In the appearances of the world [images, symbols, et cetera the alchemist] sees the reflection of eternal 'prototypes' [principles or essential qualities] ... [The] symbols which spring from [the latter] nevertheless arouse [in the mind of the alchemist] the memory or 'recollection' of these prototypes.' (Burckhardt, 1997: 40-41).¹⁰

¹⁰ Very briefly, the way in which the meditation on the symbol occurs is essentially by at first, concentration on the image using the analytical mind, and then, by allowing the intuitive mind to function, access the *meaning* behind the appearance, that is, the image. This process is understood to reveal the signification of the image. It is this touch with the sense *within* the image that is capable of allowing understanding of the quality that dwells inside the form and which is understood to be the reason behind all appearance. Let us not forget the parallels between the alchemical and certain esoteric thinking. Alice Bailey (1991) explains how, esoterically, the process unfolds: '[The person] is taught to turn within; to study motives, to acquaint himself with the qualities which are seeking expression in the outer world through the medium of his outer mechanism [his discursive mind]. As he learns to do this the nature of that outer world of mechanism alters, and he increasingly becomes aware of the qualities struggling for

Gilbert Durand understands the symbol as ‘an apparition of the unspeakable ...and also ... a redirection from the figured to its meaning’. (Durand, 2000: 11). This is a *vertical* relationship, one that shines forth from the level of the prototype into the level of the apparent, which then, symmetrically, gleams back, returning to the source. The channel hence created is the ontological *space* the symbol occupies. Here the symbol, in performing a movement of *anagogical* quality, is the *guide*.

This is clarified by the word itself: *ana* ‘motion upwards’; and *agogos* ‘leading, guiding ... a guide ... leading towards ... drawing to oneself’. (Liddell: 46, 10). Therefore, a ‘guiding upwards’ – an ascending movement from the visible towards the invisible, from the apparent to the hidden, from the sensitive to the intelligible. From the outer appearance to the essence of Self; from the body of the lovers back to their Souls.

The logical mind is considered unable to perform this task, as it remains on the cognitive level of perception. It is hence incapable of anagogical interpretation. It remains of the ‘mechanic’ aspects of the sensible, its limbs too short to leap into the area of mystery. For the discursive mind ‘the physical world is only form and movement, that is, *res extensa*,... any geometrical figure is only algebraic equation.’ (Durand, 2000: 21).¹¹

On the contrary, the imaginative mind, the one which uses the symbol, is understood to *elevate* itself towards the regions of the ineffable where it emanates from. The symbolic process Spiritualises by being a Spiritual activity. This is because it is able to reveal the Spirit inherent in the form (nature’s intrinsic sense), and by analogy, the essence of the being. When lovers meet, likewise, their encounter has the capacity of Spiritually *raising* them, providing that their amorous relationship goes – as the symbol in anagogical interpretation – *beyond* their bodies. This elevating activity necessarily implies a *total surrender*, ‘not confined to the level of the flesh’. (Chevalier, 1996: 618-619).

expression behind the outer forms. Thus the range of his conscious contacts extends, and he passes ... from an exoteric understanding of the world of phenomenal appearances to an esoteric comprehension of the world of qualities ... [This] dual apprehension must be emphasised, and ... as a man learns to “know himself”, he automatically learns to know the quality underlying all appearances. Look therefore for the quality everywhere. This is what we mean when we speak of seeing divinity on every hand ... and of registering the hidden motif of all appearing.’ (Bailey, 1991: 195-196).

¹¹ See also note 11 for convergent opinion. There the discursive mind is the first to act in the observation of the world, but is then superseded by the intuitive mind, the one which accesses the ‘world of qualities’. This notion is condensed in the title of Bailey’s book *From Intellect to Intuition* (1987).

Mirroring this notion, Durand calls the symbol 'the epiphany of a mystery'. (Durand, 2000: 11). Epiphany means the *showing* of the god, its manifestation. In the symbol this corresponds to its formal, visible aspect. A mystery is that which is not possible to *know*, and that which remains, in the end, clouded in indetermination, that is, impossible to ascertain precisely. Hence the concept of 'mystery' being widely used in the so-called 'revealed religions', such as Christianity: the 'mystery of the Incarnation', for instance. As in the symbol, only approximations as to its significance and broad interpretations of its meaning can be made. This accounts for the innumerable exegetical comments made concerning the Incarnation. The symbol remains forever open to *personal* interpretation.

In fact, the author states: 'the essential virtue of the symbol is to reassure the presence of transcendence itself within the core of the personal mystery'. (Durand, 200: 30). The proposition here is that only through meditation¹² and actual contact with the inner-self is it possible to access the symbolic process *de facto*. According to Durand, this happens because the symbol is related to *personal contact* with the divinity: 'in the pure symbolic process, the mediator [i.e., the symbol] is personal [because it is accessed by means of the inner-self] ... Emanating from free exultation, it escapes any dogmatic formulation [i.e., a definition] imposed from the exterior.' (Durand, 200: 30-31).

The result is a contact of personal, individual and therefore *intimate* nature, enabled by the relationship established between the symbol and the one who 'meditates' on it. Then, the profound role of the symbol is the 'confirmation' of meaning to *personal* freedom, that is, personal *experience*. This seems to be the reason why the symbol cannot become *explicit*. The alchemy of transmutation, of ontological transfiguration aided by the symbol can only be, in the last analysis, effected in freedom. The process of discovery of one's Self and, fundamentally, the abiding to that essentiality, requires truthfulness to that newfound (or newly made conscious) *innerness*. As does the amorous experience, which can only be truly found in each individual's freedom within a relationship.

The symbol excludes an authority external to the individual. The symbol is *active* as a platform of meditation (it excites the creative imagination), but it is *passive* in the sense that it does not impinge concepts *external* to the individual. Here personal freedom is enacted and this is why the symbolic process is dear to the alchemical thinking. By

¹² Understood from the point of view defined by Bailey – see footnote 11.

meditating on it (that is, by freely associating through the active use of one's own imagination), the symbol is able to offer direct access to the prototypes themselves, independent of other's interpretations or supposed external authority, as is the case of institutionalised religion, such as 'classic' Christianity. This is the symbol's essentially free character: it allows total imaginative associative freedom to the individual. In doing so he or she can express his/her own insight, and hence the 'god within' can be contacted. Hence, 'nothing supports [the individual's Spiritual achievements] except [his/her] intuition.' (Pagels, 1990: 48). The alchemical process makes use of the symbol because in communing with it, the person is free to associate according to his/her own necessity and capability, journeying along the path according to his/her own Spiritual devices.

Hence, fundamentally, the symbol epitomises a basic ontological principle. Specifically, it is 'free in itself' and 'liberates' whomsoever *through it* contacts the Soul of the world – simultaneously with his/her own Soul. If its direction is anagogical, its power is *poetic*: the imagination associates freely in ascending movement. For this reason, the symbol permits human emancipation from the levels of the confinement of the literal and the defined. In the experience of the symbol it is its inherent freedom that is generative of ontological revelation and understanding. Gilbert Durand calls it 'a *poetics of a transcendence*.' (Durand, 2000: 33).

The poetic power of the symbol therefore defines the individual's sovereignty. It does it better than philosophical speculation once, in the words of Pinharanda Gomes (2003: 255), 'philosophy sees liberty as an objective choice', whereas in the experience of the symbol, liberty is an essential condition for the *creation* of meaning.

Artistic activity is 'free' in the sense that it is essentially a poetic endeavour, imbued with the personal and the idiosyncratic. On this basis the alchemist, 'like [the] artist ... expresses his own insight – his own gnosis'. (Pagels, 1990: 48).¹³ Philosophy is eminently a 'logic construction', whereas poetry is (tautologically), a 'poetic construction' – 'freer' in the context here being used. (Gomes, 2003). In relation to the symbol, it has been indicated that logic alone does not allow the anagogical movement, that of the Spiritualization of manifestation, the aim of transmutational alchemy. That

¹³ There are remarkable and profound connections between the type of alchemy here being discussed and Gnosis. Gnostics believe that the god outside is the same as the god within. In relation to the freedom issue considered in the main body of the text, it claims that 'the initiate [is capable of] direct access to God, of which the priests and the bishops themselves might be ignorant.' (Pagels, 1990: 54).

‘guiding upwards’ is done only through the means of the symbol. Therefore, an art which, pertains to the symbolic or that shares elements from it, is an art that, by definition, permits this kind of elevation.

Such art attempts to *exhale* the meaning which it inhabits, and therefore attempts to reveal a Spiritual significance of the thing produced, the work of art. This finds parallels with the alchemist’s activity. Revealingly, alchemy is also known as *Ars Regia* or ‘Regal Art’ – an artistic, because eminently *creative*, process itself.

It is from this perspective that I understand my work as being an attempt to enact, in *principle*, a ‘poetics of transcendency’ as defined by Gilbert Durand. My poetic quest is, ultimately, the search for a notion of the transcendental. This expression encapsulates and illustrates a core philosophy expressed in the artwork. The latter attempts at surpassing its representation, while still affirming the *sensorial experience* of the object. The meaning requires the phenomenon as much as the perceivable requires the significance.

The work endeavours to depart from realist concepts, that is, from the epidermis of things, the way they appear *exclusively* to the senses. Evidence for this can be found in the abstract touch represented – the *inactuality* of the physical contact between the horn and the star, which are still perceived as effectively touching each other. Likewise, in the placing of the collection inside an octagonal room, a symbol of the intermediate between ontological dimensions. Furthermore, the room itself is festooned with gold. This, in one ascending movement, symbolically elevates the room with the pieces inside. That is, the totality of the artwork.

The way the symbol is used in this research, along with the philosophies of alchemy and esotericism, is exclusively vicarious, that is, indirect and second-hand. In the process of arriving at sculptural form, I make readings, offered by others, on proposed meaning of the symbols. These readings are then considered in conjunction with the creative process. The latter includes the association of elements as described at the beginning of this chapter.

Even though the philosophy of the symbol is of interest to me, the symbol is, in the case of this research, not method as such (I do not meditate on the symbols I make use of in the conception of the artwork) but is here used as inspirational source.

The way in which the symbol is here used as *muse* happens in two ways: on the one hand, the meanings suggested by the literature and tradition. On the other, the philosophical principle of the definition of symbol: the creative joining of an appearance and a concept in a *form* (namely a piece of artwork).

In summary, the symbol is relevant because I make use of symbolic *descriptions* to arrive at sculptural form. The symbol in its visible aspect, containing information about its meaning and significance. The artwork deals essentially with significances, which are understood to be contained within the form of the pieces. Likewise, the fact of the verticality of the symbol, the anagogical movement that Spiritualises and that is a theme in the artwork. Furthermore, the symbol assumes the inseparable division between its two components, the signifier and the signified. In the artwork, the 'lovers' and 'being and his/her internal nature' are *images* of this essential aspect of the symbol.

Naturally, the artwork is not itself a symbol, even though, as image, it contains a symbolic *intention*. That which the artwork performs can be equated with a 'profane icon'.

'Profane', because it is not conceived within a religious frame. 'Icon', (that means 'simile, likeness, semblance' (Liddell: 196), that is, a re-presentation of a presence) because first, it is a re-presentation, a copy of a model: rings, human skin, movement of light, the *act* of reversing the dress, et cetera. Second, it is also re-representation, by the spectator, of what I, as maker, have intellectually and technically represented.

The models (which have given origin to the piece: the lovers, the acts, the moulds, et cetera) *disappear* but their representation (the piece of art) *maintains the presence* of this definitive absence.

Each spectator who sees the work is, in a sense, invited to repeat the same gesture I have made, and enact his/her own *sovereignty* in doing so. It is then that the pieces become

truly *visible*, in the appearing of the absent thing – the ‘original’ model, in the mind of the spectator.

An act of ‘freedom’ produced the artwork. A ‘freedom of imaginary associations’ as Didi-Huberman has written. (1995: 8). Yet this liberty is mostly and essentially directed to the spectator. The artwork is understood to have an eminently open character. These elucidations and reflections of my thoughts are intended to be proposals and do not intend to be determinant. The presentation of the artwork’s creative context serves as a sort of substratum above which an idiosyncratic, personal perspective is enacted, serving as interpretative *suggestion*.

Chapter 3: Aveo Amor

This chapter deals with the contextual material used for the creation of the piece Aveo Amor. It is subdivided as follows:

- a) Sculptural Processes
 - a. Description
 - b. Foundational Image
- b) The unicorn in alchemy and esoteric philosophy – emergence of the helical form
- c) Sirius – the origin of love
- d) Octagon – a symbolical approach



Figure 10. Aveo Amor (2006). On the pillow, in low relief, alignment with the rising of Sirius.

3.1 Sculptural Processes

3.1.1 Description

This work is a gilded helix form (reminiscent of a 'unicorn's horn') resting on a silk pillow and placed at such an angle that once a year, from the position where it stands, it aligns with the star Sirius. The helix is a hollow surface measuring 5 metres length tapering into a point from a diameter of 0.37 meters at the bottom. The bottom is cut at an angle of 16° , the same angle that the Earth's equator and Sirius keep in their relative positioning in space.¹⁴ The helix becomes hollow at the tip, creating there a physical nothingness. Areas on the gilded surface have been rubbed ('caressed'), thus exposing the red bole underneath the gold.

The helix rests on a plane table¹⁵ at an angle of 27° . This is the angle of alignment for the culmination of Sirius on the day of its heliacal rising in Edinburgh on the 17th of August 2006. The star culminates at 09.40 hours.

The helix and *tabula* rest on a square white silk pillow, length 3 metres. The direction of alignment of the helix at the moment of the heliacal rising of Sirius, at 04.49 hours is marked in low relief on the pillow.

¹⁴ The actual angle of the star with the equator is minus $16^\circ 43' 25''$. (Cornelius, 2003).

¹⁵ Or *mensula praetoriana*, a topographical surveying instrument.

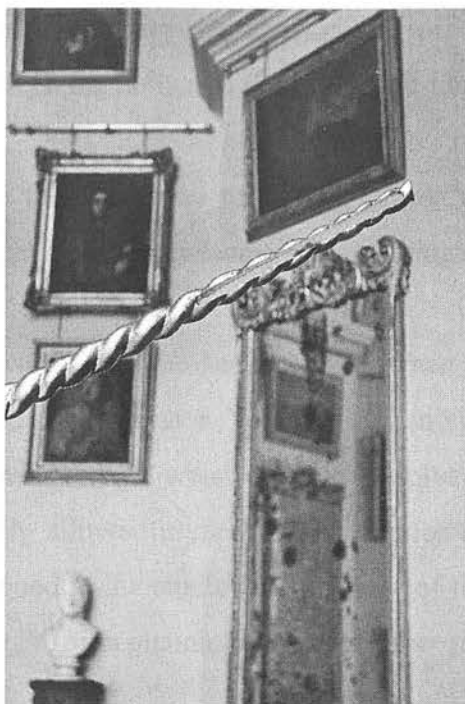


Figure 11. tip of *Aveo Amor*.



Figure 12. Rubbed (caressed) gold exposing red bole underneath.

3.1.2 Foundational Image

Contrary to my usual approach, in which a clear idea of the work to be made arises in my mind, in the beginning there was no clear image for this particular piece. What was clear however, was my wish to portray a sense of journey and approach between two lovers. In fact, before setting out to carve the horn, I had the intention of producing a distinct object from the one which would later become *Aveo Amor*. In brief, it consisted of two lovers carrying a lit candle through the inner side of an arch, leaving the candles' soot marks on the surface. The lovers would start off their journey at the feet of the arch and would meet at its apex. Conceptually, I was interested in depicting the sense of movement and journey of two people towards one another, leaving the candles' marks as evidence of their passing. As will be seen below, the principle was kept. What was changed was those who journey and the *situs* of their journeying.¹⁶

Returning to consider *Aveo Amor*, the helix (equated with one of the lovers mentioned above) arrived as the surfacing of a memory and the star (the other lover) arrived as a

¹⁶ For an elongated description of the idea and concept for the piece, see Chapter 6 'Related artists' – Tarkovsky.

sensation during the construction process (the carving) of the horn. The connection between the helix and the star was established – or revealed – by the sensation.

It is therefore true that Aveo Amor is a work which at its beginning was an act of acceptance: the surfacing of something which one passively receives.

The image of the helix formed when I returned to the studio where in the past I had attempted to cast a 'unicorn's horn' in salt. This object did not develop because of technical issues which I did not resolve at the time. I came back into the studio space and gladly allowed myself to be permeated by the space and memories left there. When I returned to the studio, the memory of the horn resurfaced with special vehemence. Even though I was planning to start another piece, I decided to accept the horn.

The star appeared in a different way. The star was not something from the past that required dealing with again, and resolving. The star was a gift.

In the first days of the carving of the horn I was getting up before sunrise and would look into the sky from the bedroom window and see a very shiny star above the trees. I felt a special connection with this star and it seemed, from my subjective perspective, to be 'guiding' me – or giving me a sense that it was an objective, a focus for arrival. The connection I felt clearly came from my heart – it was an emotion.¹⁷

Therefore, the subjective connection with the star had a 'sensorial' manifestation, in which the 'vision' coupled with the emotion had my chest standing at the root of the horn and the star at its tip. In the impression the horn extended between my heart and the shining celestial object. The horn was therefore like a *path* to be travelled across in order to reach the star. This mirrored, in an idiosyncratic way, the notion of the lovers coming together.

At this point the idea of having the horn pointing at the empyreal body was revealed. This thought was corroborated when later in the process of developing this research I became aware of my earliest memory being of looking at a starry sky. The surfacing of

¹⁷ This aspect would be significant in the sense that Eros and *Saudade* would play a fundamental role in the theme of the research, albeit at the time of the beginning of the carving of the horn I was still not fully conscious of that.

this memory supported the personal poetic correctness of establishing this rapport between the star and the horn – my heart at the latter's root, the star at its extremity, its length sensed as path. Namely, it confirmed the intimate individual historical relationship between myself and stars, clearly mirrored by the dawn star attachment.¹⁸ It therefore made poetic sense to celebrate this connection.

I have never discovered which celestial body I was in reality looking at on those early morning days. It might in fact have been the planet Venus. The choice of Sirius as 'target' star came as product of research for an *empyreality* which would conceptually fit within the context of this research. Hence, I looked at several proposed meanings in esoteric literature which could offer an answer for this thematic correspondence. Sirius was chosen for its association with love and expression of hierogamic energies. And also for in history having been a star whose annual alignment with places and man-made structures on earth has been of significance and consequently worshiped, as in the ancient Egyptian case.

¹⁸ See Chapter 5 *Saudade for the Future* 'Foundational Image', for details on the surfacing of the memory and details on its relevance in connection with this research.

3.2 The unicorn in alchemy and esoteric philosophy – emergence of the helical form

The unicorn is a creature of subtle nature. There is a sense in which it cannot be confined, that is, it eludes definition. Being a mythical animal, it is unreal in the sense that it does not exist in nature, however it is deeply implanted in the collective imagination. Everyone confronted with its figure immediately recognizes it by form and name. It is represented as either having the body of a horse or a donkey or as a small, kid-like creature. But it can also be represented as a series of hybrids, with cloven hoofs on the front legs and solid hoofs of the back ones and vice versa; as having a goat's beard on a horse's legs or the body of a goat with the head of a horse. However its pervading and defining attribute is the single horn protruding from the forehead, which is understood to hold the essence of its nature.¹⁹

In this research the unicorn is relevant for three reasons, all related with its single helical horn:

¹⁹ The myth of the unicorn has origin in China where it is called Chi-Lin, Chi meaning Yang and Lin meaning Yin. There is considered to be a creature of good omen.

Odell Shepard in his book *The Lore of the Unicorn* (1930) refers that the first account in western literature dates to early in the 4th Century BCE by Ctesias of Cnidos in his book *Indica* (a commissioned history of Persia in 23 books) – this is the earliest account of a unicorn. This account is however, not from his own 'sighting' but taken from descriptions of travellers whom Ctesias interviewed. Several other authors refer to the unicorn, amongst them Aelian, who refers to the healing properties of the horn and is the first to refer to the natural helical twisting of the unicorn's horn, the *spirillae*. It is Pliny the Elder who adds to the previous descriptions a long horn – two cubits long – and the impossibility of a live capture. This last characteristic will remain unaltered from then onwards in the lore of the unicorn and will set the framework for its symbolic significance in myth, legend and religion.

The unicorn is mentioned in the Bible's Old Testament where it appears seven times: twice in the Pentateuch, once in Job, once in Isaiah, thrice in the Psalms (Sheppard: 41-42). However it is suggested that the naming is a mistranslation of the Hebrew word *re'em*, which was translated initially into Greek as 'monoceros' and then literally translated into Latin as 'unicorn': 'mono' – 'uni' 'ceros' – horn. It was only in the 18th Century that the belief in real, flesh and blood unicorns, subsided.

Another influence besides the Bible has carried the legend of the unicorn into the centre of the western imaginary and into Christian myth and symbolism. In Alexandria – under Christian influence – in the 3rd Century was produced the *Physiologus*, a bestiary which compiled myths of various species. In it was included the story of the unicorn. Although several versions exist, the central story line is common, and presents a virgin who is placed alone in a wood who attracts the unicorn to her lap, where he falls asleep or gets drunk on her milk and then the hunters can come and arrest the unicorn. The *Physiologus* was in circulation for more than a thousand years and its legends circulated throughout Christendom. It was mainly through the circulation of these texts that the image of the unicorn was disseminated throughout Europe. There were various versions of the *Physiologus*, and the myths and legends between them differed slightly. It would be the unicorn of the *Physiologus* that would have more influence in the unicorn as a Christian symbol. (Sheppard, 1930: 47-58, 61-69).

- a) From alchemy its signification is as the transcendence of the male and the female principles, of the duality in man of Spirit and matter, that is, the unicorn as symbol of the consummation of opposites, or the *coincidentia oppositorum*.
- b) From esoteric philosophy and mysticism the unicorn as image of the 'triumphant initiate', i.e., the 'perfected' human.
- c) In modern science the form of the helix as essential shape within nature. From optics the helical movement of light, from biology the helical shape of each DNA strand.

This research is predicated on the validity from the perspective of the *form* of the horn, the horn here understood as symbol. It is from the point of view of the form that the above subheadings connect. That is, what alchemy and esotericism propose can be, as explained below, analogically supported by the findings in optics and biology. This is because the form, when considered from the point of view of symbology, contains the information, the essence which presides and antecedes its appearance as phenomenon. That which is *common* in optics, biology, mysticism and alchemy is the *form of the horn*, the helix. They all share the same prototype or fundamental shape. These are examples of how the symbol works: all the interpretations of the disparate area of knowledge are able to converge to the suggestion of a totalising meaning contained within the form.

3.2.1 *The unicorn in alchemy*

In alchemy the image of the unicorn suggests the resolution of opposites and is related with the soteriological aspect of alchemical philosophy, which it shares with Christian doctrine and esoteric thought.²⁰

In China where the myth is understood to have originated, it is called Chi-Lin, Chi meaning the masculine attribute (*yang*) and Lin meaning the feminine attribute (*yin*). In the East, the unicorn 'is associated with the "third eye" [the Spiritual vision], with the attainment of Nirvana and the return to the centre of the Monad [the Pure Spirit. It was therefore] ideally fated to denote for the western hermeticist the path to the Philosopher's

²⁰ Soteriology, from Greek *soterios* 'salvation' (Liddell, 1989) is the Christian doctrine that human salvation has been brought about by the Christ. However, all religions, under one definition or another, all have this aim at their end.

Gold – the inner transmutation effected when the primordial hermaphrodite is recreated’, the stage of sexual undifferentiation, that is, of duality overcome. ‘The single horn may also symbolise a stage upon the way of differentiation, from biological procreation (sexuality) to psychic evolution (a sexual oneness) and to sexual sublimation...Instead of possessing a twofold sexuality the unicorn transcends sexuality itself.’ (Chevalier, 1996: 1056, 1054). That is, the unicorn in representing the absence of duality becomes an image of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, to use the alchemical nomenclature.

The unicorn is mentioned in Lambsprinck’s *De Lapide philosophico*, a Frankfurt edition of 1625. In it appears together with a deer in the forest and it is said to symbolise the Spirit (which is asexual), whereas the deer represents the Soul and the forest the body of the alchemist. A legend to the image reads: ‘blessed be the one who is able to capture them with skill and thus tame them’ (Roob: 308). Another example of the depiction of the unicorn is in the *Museum Hermeticum* an edition by Apud Hermannum à Sande of 1749 (Frankfurt) where it is represented within the philosophical tree, which symbolises the seven phases of the alchemical work. In the tree, the unicorn appears as symbol of the *albedo* phase (or white phase), the before-last phase of the transmutation process ‘from where the red roses of the final solidification spring.’ (Roob: 308). The *rubedo* (or red phase) phase is the final stage of the alchemical process. Once more the unicorn appears as, if not image of the outcome of the process, as nearing its very end, when the last phase occurs, that of the unification or *rubedo*.



Figure 13. Lambsprinck, *De Lapide Philosophico*, Frankfurt, 1625.

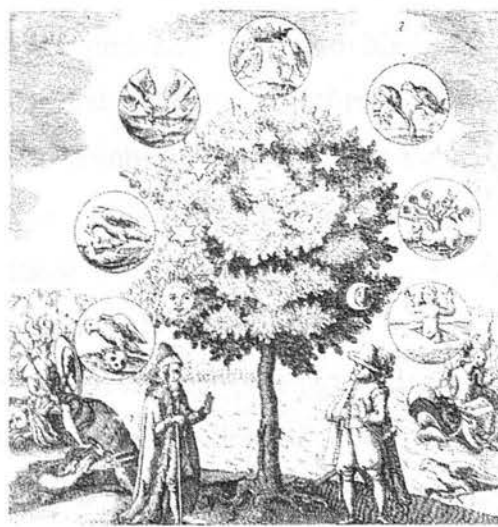


Figure 14. Apud Hermannum à Sande, *Museum Hermeticum*, Frankfurt, 1749.

Richardus Anglicus' *Rosarium Philosophorum* (Frankfurt, 1550) is an illustrated alchemical text depicting the facets of the process of conscious Spiritual development of the alchemist. It has twenty images depicting each of the stages of the alchemical work, which outline 'a process for the inner conscious encounter, separation, purification, re-conjunction and harmonisation of the male and female facets of the Soul.' (Maclean, 1980: 129). The *Rosarium's* last image – representing the culmination of the work –is that of the *Christus Resurrectus*.



Figure 15. 'Christus Resurrectus', Richardus Anglicus, *Rosarium Philosophorum*, 1550, Frankfurt.



Figure 16. Fra Angelico and collaborators, 'The Holy Women at the Tomb', about 1438-50, fresco, Florence, convent of San Marco, cell 8.

Therefore, in the publication, the saved, purified human being (the 'triumphant' alchemist) appears as the risen Christ, leaving his tomb and carrying in his left hand the '*labarum*, the banner marked with a cross, sign of the Resurrection'. (Freitas, 2003: 156). (Figures 15 and 16.) With his right hand he points to the *empty* sepulchre, which indicates that the completed alchemical process has involved the transmutation – not merely the transformation nor the transcendence – of the body. This indicates that according to the author of the *Rosarium*, the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body signified neither the suppression nor the transcendence of the physical body, but its glorification and perfection. If that were not the case, then within the tomb the remains of the dead body would be lying inside. What is represented in the image is *Christus Resurrectus*, the embodiment of the hierogamic union between the human and the divine, that is, humanity's perfect nature achieved. (Voss, *Spiritual Alchemy*, in van der Broek: 1998).

Christian exegesis has associated the image and the legend of the unicorn with Christ. The legend narrated in the *Physiologus* portrays the unicorn in the figure of a small kid-like creature allured into the lap of a virgin girl. This would be the only way, according to legend, in which the creature could be captured alive. This story would be called in the religious exegesis, in mystical tones, the 'Holy Hunt', which links the Christ to the unicorn itself. As a whole, the story of the unicorn's capture was understood to typify the Incarnation of Christ, the mystery at the core of Christianity. Thus, the one horn on the forehead of the unicorn was interpreted as signifying the unity of Christ with the Father; the animal's fierceness and defiance as the indomitable Messiah's will; its small stature as a symbol of Christ's humility; the likeness of the unicorn to a small goat, Christ's association with sinful people²¹; the virgin in the allegory was likened to the Virgin Mary. The hunters were taken to stand for the Holy Spirit acting through the Archangel Gabriel. The virgin-capture serves as allegory of Annunciation, later it will embrace the whole symbolism of the total life and death of Christ.²²

It is the case that according to the Christian doctrine Jesus Christ, through the mystery of Incarnation, blends in himself the human and divine natures. Furthermore, through his Passion, that is his love for humanity, Christ saves humanity redeeming its sins and thus allowing for the latter's eternal life in the Spirit. (Freitas, 2003). That is, Christ is himself the two natures (human and divine, matter and Spirit) and furthermore he gives humanity the possibility of achieving a state of 'perfection' – his *own* state. The two natures are in harmony in one entity.

The reference to Christ in this text is in relation to his association with the unicorn in Christian exegesis. In this regard the unicorn is the epitome of the transcending of polarities to which the alchemist aspires. Likewise the alchemists have used the image of Christ as an image of the perfected human, the one who has unified within himself the polarities. Also, because Christ embodies love and through his love for humanity he saved it. Further down the text and following an analogical and symbolic method it will be seen how the unicorn is likewise associated with love.

²¹ As seen further down the text and as suggested by Bailey (2000), the goat will have a different interpretation.

²² For detailed and expanded exposition see Sheppard (1930: 47-58, 61-69).

3.2.2 *The unicorn in esotericism*

In this section the esoteric philosophy of Alice Bailey will be considered. Two main issues are of relevance here and again they are related to the helical shape of the unicorn's horn:

- a) the helix as the form of love
- b) the image of the unicorn as the 'triumphant initiate'

I will start by offering a general approach to the esoteric philosophy as it appears in this literature and then proceed to consider in greater detail the two issues indicated in the above subheadings.²³

Alice Bailey places emphasis on esoteric teaching²⁴, the divinity of humanity and contact with non-material higher beings called 'Masters of Wisdom' or 'Adepts'.²⁵

Her axiom in its ontological and cosmological aspects, is hermetic at heart and therefore the human being is understood essentially as a Spiritual creature. As previously referred to, hermetic thought assumes the duality in manifestation.²⁶ Thus, human life's aim is essentially an evolution or expansion of consciousness towards the *original* quality of Pure Spirit or God. That is, being humanity's origin and existence divine, its life expresses God's life itself. Overall the tone of Alice Bailey's writing is along the lines of all pantheists, that 'all is God [God Immanent] and that God is an impersonal energy force [God Transcendent]. (Bailey, 1990: 144-145). For the author, humankind itself and

²³ Alice Bailey's writings, also referred to as 'teachings' are very complex in form and content. They are a body of knowledge which contains a complete system of remarkable complexity. I repeat here that my use of this information is vicarious and poetic. This material as well as other material of this nature is used in my work as inspirational background and only a very small amount of it actually constitutes inspirational source. My understanding of it is necessarily patchy and rather incomplete. I have chosen to refer in this text, from the large amount of work she published, only that which directly links with my work and that which has directly influenced the its production. For details and in-depth treatment of the issues merely brushed upon below see any of the books referred in the bibliography but also all her writing.

²⁴ The words "esoteric" and "occult" signify "that which is hidden"; they indicate that which lies behind the outer seeming and point to the causes which produce appearance and effects; they are concerned with the subtler world of energies and forces which all outer forms veil and hide. They deal with that which must be known before the initiate-consciousness can be developed.' (Bailey, (no date): 4).

²⁵ The majority of Alice Bailey's books and those which contain the essence of her esoteric teaching were reputedly dictated directly to her by a Master of Wisdom, known as the Tibetan or Djwal Khul. The first of these books is *Initiation, Human and Solar* and was initially published in 1922 by Lucis Trust, London.

²⁶ See Chapter 2 'Methods and Processes'.

all individuals are expressions or manifestations of the divine, and thus themselves divine: 'it is essential that we grasp the fact of our divinity.' (Bailey, 1989: 212).

Every person's Spiritual development, which is carried through countless incarnations, is the outcome of an ever increasing expansion of consciousness and is teleologically the realisation of his or her inherent nature, God Himself. 'The Spirit of man is undying; it forever endures, progressing from point to point and stage to stage upon the Path of Evolution, unfolding steadily and sequentially the divine attributes and aspects.' (Bailey, 1987a: 1). This is done by placing the emphasis upon *knowing* God, *identifying* with It, from a conscious perspective and not just upon *feeling* after a sensed divinity. The latter is an attribute of the mystic, who *senses* God but does not *know* It. '[One] method involves the emotional nature and is based on belief in a God who can give. The other involves the mental nature and is based on belief in the divinity of man himself.' (Bailey, 1987b: 68). Thus these teachings place the greatest emphasis in the expansion of consciousness from the point of view of understanding.

The text will now concentrate on the energies and forces which according to esoteric philosophy are the very substance of all creation and where the helix as the form which in the universe manifests love finds its origin. It will then proceed to consider how the same form appears in humanity itself along the path of its evolution, giving rise to what is called the 'unicorn of God'.

'All that is manifesting in and on our planet is nothing but an aggregation of forces, producing forms...all is movement and livingness.' (Bailey, (no date): 15).

It is understood that all manifestation – i.e., the cosmos – emanates from three major rays, called the 'Rays of Manifestation'. These rays stem directly from the One into the Triad. Newey (2003: 2) quotes Helena Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine (1888): '[One] is Absolute Consciousness [and is outside manifestation. It] has been plunged into the universe [and thus] fragmented...Its absolute attribute ...is the perpetual motion of the universe... [T]hat which is motionless cannot be DIVINE. But then there is nothing in fact and reality absolutely motionless within the universal Soul.'

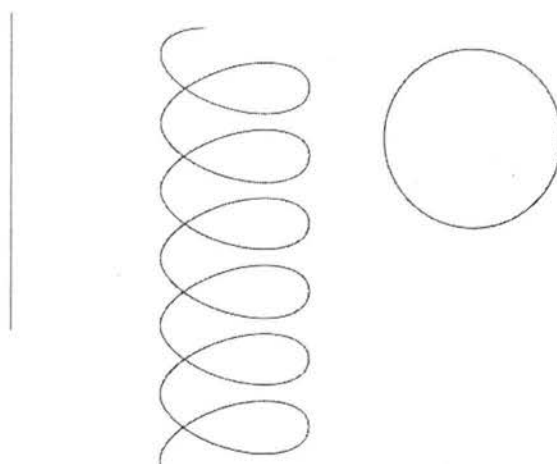
Motion is thus the exceptional feature of manifestation and there are three fundamental types, each one relating to an aspect of the Divine Trinity, which is called the Monad.²⁷ The Monad is thus composed of three aspects or rays, called the Divine Trinity: Ray I (Will or Power), Ray II (Love-Wisdom) and Ray III (Active Intelligence).²⁸ In Christian terminology these are called respectively the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; in Hinduism Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma; the Hebrew Kether, Chokmah and Binah and the Egyptian Osiris, Horus and Isis.

The rays of the divine Trinity, upon emerging directly from the undivided One separate in two, into Will and into Active Intelligence. Immediately a third aspect springs forth, which is the *relationship* between the two, giving thus origin to the ray of Love-Wisdom. 'Three is ... the divine number that immediately springs forth from duality.' (Newey: 10). This happens because when the One (which is not manifest, thus has no *form*) manifests itself (becomes cosmos) it automatically becomes two. This is an expression of the essential or original duality in the universe, expressed in the cosmic duality of the masculine and feminine aspects – Father and Holy Spirit, Osiris and Isis, Will and Active Intelligence. However, the immediate interplay between the 'original' two gives birth to the Son, Horus or Love. In this respect, Love is both the result of the interplay and is also responsible for the attraction that each pole feels for the other. It is this subsequent bonding of poles, which is active, and is the attractive force in the manifested universe.

Each of these rays has movement in a characteristic way, each has a form which identifies it and is a result of the intention of their manifestation.

²⁷ See Appendix C 'The Constitution of Man'.

²⁸ These subdivide into four other rays but with which I am not dealing with.



<i>Ray I – Will, direct forward motion</i>	<i>Ray II – Love- Wisdom, helical movement</i>	<i>Ray III – Active Intelligence, rotary motion</i>
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Figure 17. The Three Rays of Manifestation.

Starting with Ray III or Active Intelligence it ‘expresses itself through *rotary motion*, which is due to the fire latent in matter itself.... [it is] revolution in matter [found throughout nature in the circular movement of galaxies, planets or atoms. It is where] variety and differentiation [is to be found].’ (Newey: 3).

Ray I or Will expresses itself as a *direct forward motion* – a vector – and ‘is a literal driving forward through space. This forward progression is the will behind the evolutionary process that drives Spirit onward until it emerges from matter with added quality and faculty from the experience it has undergone. [Its function] is to hold [in manifestation the Spirits who are gaining consciousness through manifestation] for the desired period and then to abstract and blend them again with their Spiritual source.’ (Newey: 3).

Ray II or Love-Wisdom ‘is seeking to blend with [the] Active Intelligence of the third aspect and He adds to the rotary motion of all atoms His own form of motion, *spiralling periodical* movement. By circulating along an orbit around a central focal point in an ever ascending spiral, two results are brought about. Firstly, the gathering of atoms in forms. And secondly, by means of these forms, the gaining of ...contact and the

development of consciousness through a gradual rarefying and refining of the forms of the Spirit of Love or the Flame Divine spirals ever onward towards the source from which it came.' (Newey: 3).

Thus, from a formal point of view, Ray I or Will expresses itself in movement as vector, Ray III or Active Intelligence as circle, Ray II or Love-Wisdom, therefore becomes the result of the blending of the two previous ones and produces a *helix*. The merging of the natures of both rays is an erotic encounter, that is, it is the product of love. But at the same time, it is also the *form* that love effects or performs (the merging of the two original movements). The helix, as has been seen, is found sprouting from the unicorn's forehead. Therefore the creature, with its helical horn, expresses and manifests, that is, renders visible, the *consciousness* of love. Explicitly, the form (the helix) reveals, makes apparent, its essential Spiritual nature: precisely, love.²⁹

The constitution of each person is, according to the esoteric philosophy here considered, threefold thus comprising three bodies, Personality, Soul or Ego and Pure Spirit or Monad. These bodies are inextricably linked and form each individual in his or her completeness.³⁰ The aim of life is to bring these bodies in harmony with each other, and to align them so that eventually the energy stemming from the Monad flows directly and uninterrupted into the Personality when they are understood to merge. This, understood as the 'return to the Pure Spirit', is the ultimate aim of life. This is achieved through successive initiations and successive corresponding at-one-ments. To each at-one-ment corresponds one initiation.

Initiation is defined 'from two Latin words, *in* "into"; and *ire*, "to go"; therefore, *the making of a beginning* or the entrance into something. [In the sense used here it means] an entrance into the Spiritual life, or into a fresh stage in that life... [It is] a process of undergoing an expansion of consciousness ... [It entails] the inner comprehension that sees the value underlying the form ... [It gives] an expansion of consciousness that admits the Personality into the wisdom attained by the Ego, and in the higher initiations into the consciousness of the Monad.' (Bailey, 1992: 10-14).

²⁹ Hence the Christian theory that Christ is or embodies love and the unicorn as (one of) his images.

³⁰ See Appendix C 'The Constitution of Man'.

At-one-ment results from initiation. The author clarifies: '[each] successive initiation brings about a more complete unification of the Personality with the Ego [or Soul] and later ... with the Monad. The whole evolution of the human Spirit is a progressive at-one-ment. As evolution proceeds several at-one-ments occur...At-one-ments at all levels – emotional, intuitional, Spiritual and Divine – consist in conscious, continuous functioning. In all cases it is preceded by ... the destruction...of all that separates. The approach to unity is through destruction of the lower, and of all that forms a barrier. [An example] the web that separates the etheric body and the emotional [astral]. When that web has been burned away...the communication between the bodies of the Personality becomes continuous and complete, and the three lower vehicles function as one.' (Bailey, 1987: 31). The perfect at-one-ment is understood to be the union, as uninterrupted flow of energy, between the Personality, the Soul and the Monad.

The whole procedure is therefore to make a person consciously at one first with him or herself, i.e. his or her Soul, and others around him or her. Then, with his or her Spirit and the Monad, and finally with the Logos. (Bailey, 1992).

This '*bridging has to be done in the consciousness aspect*, and concerns the continuity of man's awareness of life in all his various aspects'. (Bailey, 1987a: 31).

The Initiate is whosoever has effected all the lower syntheses: the energy used in consciousness to connect the physical body with the astral body; then of the astral body with the mental one, and then of the mental body with the Soul. After that the path is still to be trod, in the ascension which will bring still higher unions with the reality that uses the Soul as its medium of expression, that is the Monad, 'just as the Soul in its turn is endeavouring to use its shadow, the threefold lower man [that is, his or her Personality]. These distinctions and unifications ...are used to express events and happenings in the world of energies and forces in connection with which man is definitely implicated. It is to these unifications that we refer when the subject of initiation is under consideration.' (Bailey, 1987a: 31-32).

As indicated above, evolution, as expansion of consciousness, aims at establishing the encounter between the form aspect and the Spirit source in humanity. This is done by the activity of the Soul. By existing in between the Personality aspect (lower human nature)

and the Spirit aspect (higher human nature), the Soul is the result of the relationship between the two. But it is also the reason for their mutual attraction. Soul is essentially love, and therefore both (Soul and love, here equated) are link and intermediary between these two poles. (Bailey, 1991). It is the ascending, anagogic force that Spiritualises matter and materialises Spirit. The bringing together of the two natures is an act of love expressed in and by the Soul of each individual.

The aim of life is to bring about the Spiritualization of matter and thus reunite with the Monad, the source of life itself. As the individual progresses in his or her path of return, he or she purifies his or her nature and successive at-one-ments with corresponding initiations occur. As this happens, as his or her journey on the path progresses, it is understood that the vibration of his or her subtle body increases and the light existing within him or herself – which is his or her nature – expresses itself more intensely. As this light, this energy, increases, the spirals that have their ‘root’ in the etheric body spread through to his or her other more subtle bodies, and start to spin more rapidly and are increasingly more defined as vortexes of energy. (Bailey, 1992). This happens gradually and through the successive at-one-ments. Until, upon reaching what is called the ‘third initiation’ (when the energies of the Soul and the Monad align) he or she becomes an initiate and a clearly defined vortex of energy, in the form of a helix stems from his or her forehead, giving rise to what is called the ‘triumphant initiate’ or ‘unicorn of God’.

Alice Bailey understands Hercules’ twelve labours as the symbolic expression of the path of every person, first as aspirant, then as disciple journeying on his or her path towards becoming the ‘triumphant initiate’. These twelve labours can be set against and analysed in tandem with the twelve astrological signs of the Zodiac. ‘Hercules astrologically enacted the life history of every aspirant... In the twelve labours he played the part of the aspirant upon the Path of Discipleship...he undertook certain tasks, symbolic in nature ...he stands for the incarnated, yet not perfected, Son of God...[He] subjects [his lower nature – the Personality – to the discipline] which will eventually produce the emergence of divinity.’ (Bailey, 2000: 5).

As Hercules progresses he purifies himself until he reaches the union with the Monad. Upon the fulfilment of the task placed before him in the sign of Capricorn, that of the

slaying of Cerberus, the guardian of Hades, he then becomes an initiate, the 'Unicorn of God'. The quality of the sign, says Alice Bailey, is that of 'transfiguration'. (Bailey, 2000: 214). 'A symbol of the initiate is the unicorn along with the goat'.³¹ (Bailey, 2000: 172).

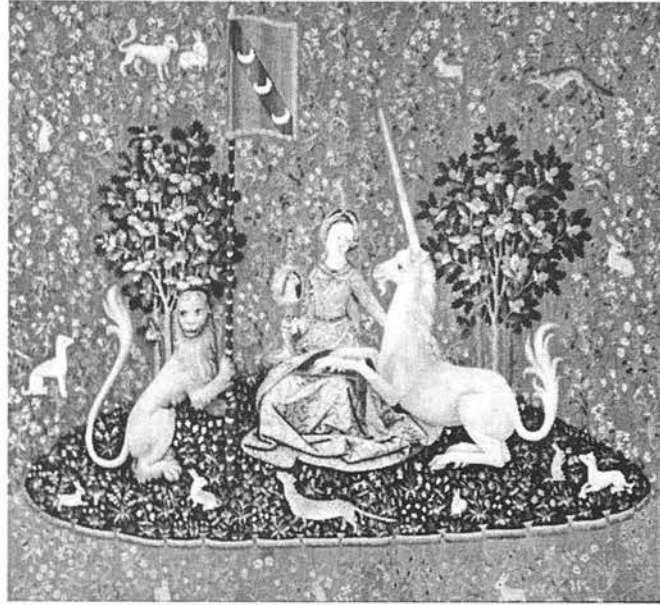


Figure 18. 'The Lady and the Unicorn' tapestries, 16th century, France, Paris, Musée de Cluny.

'At the foot of the mountain, [also called the 'mount of initiation' (Bailey, 2000: 9)] the goat, the materialist, seeks nourishment in arid places. The scapegoat on the way up finds the flowers of attained desire, each with its own thorn of satiety and disillusionment. At the top of the mountain the sacred goat sees the vision and the initiate appears.' (Bailey, 2000: 171).

'Capricorn [is] the gate through which we finally pass when we no longer identify ourselves with the form side of existence but become identified with the Spirit. This is what means to be initiate... he focuses in what we call the Soul, which is that aspect of ourselves which is free from form.' (Bailey, 2000: 172). This is when the energies of the lower self (Personality) and the upper self (Monad) unite and he is then 'liberated'. '[To be pure] is really freedom from the limitations of matter.' (Bailey, 2000: 177).

³¹ Hence the representation of the unicorn in the *Physiologus* and also, for instance in the tapestries at the Musée de Cluny being that of a goat-like creature. (Figure 15).

The achieved aim of Capricorn is to offer the picture of the 'unicorn of God' and the triumphant initiate'. In the nursery rhyme about 'the lion and the unicorn who go into town' the mystery of initiation is preserved. It depicts the emergence of the light and the one-pointed consciousness of the initiate, the unicorn, and the defeat of the king of animals (the lion), i.e., the Personality. Hence 'the unicorn is the fighting and triumphant creature of the ancient myths, leading to the triumph of group consciousness, selflessness and illumination over self-consciousness and selfishness.' (Bailey, 1979: 153-154).

The interpretation here proposes that in the labours anteceding those represented in Capricorn, Hercules' tasks focused mainly in his individual development and liberation from the conditioning of matter. From this sign onwards his work takes on a universal perspective, embracing the idea of service to the whole, and culminating in the world saviour in Pisces. He descends the mountaintop to join a humanity in need, bringing them light and release.³²

Here he becomes a 'server of humanity' and is when he consciously reaches out to help others, behind him in their evolutionary path, to help them to fulfil their *telos* (ultimate aim), their union with the Monad.³³ This is, esoterically speaking, an act of love. Thus, when each human being reaches the third initiation, symbolised by the astrological sign, he or she has become an initiate. (Bailey, 2000: 173). And unfolding within him or her the consciousness of love he or she embodies this love. The person has become the unicorn with its helical horn.

The unicorn is in myth associated with purity. It is 'pure', 'immaculate', that is, without *macula*. He also has the capability of purification, an ability concentrated in his *horn*. (Chevalier, 1996: 1054).³⁴ From an esoteric point of view the human being is light in

³² Pisces is associated with Christ, the Christian world saviour. The fish is one of his symbols. (Bailey, 1979).

³³ According to the esoteric interpretation here considered, 'service' is love applied. It is understood as being a necessary outcome of initiation. It is the condition of those who have achieved a level of perfection that allows them to express the love towards others. In a sense life serves life and this is done through the agency of love – the aim of the consciousness in the universe, i.e., the aim of God, being that of 'saving' the whole of his creation. The adept has the role – and the responsibility – of helping those who are not as advanced in the path as he or she is. 'Identification with group purposes and plans is the natural attribute of the Soul. As this identification is carried forward on mental and Soul levels, it produces a corresponding activity we call service. Service is the true science of creation and is a scientific method of establishing continuity.' (Bailey, 1987a: 97).

³⁴ This is called the 'water conning properties of the unicorn. In the myth it purifies the poisoned water by dipping its horn in it. This myth appears in the *Physiologus*. (Sheppard, 1930).

different stages of vibration.³⁵ The helix protruding from the initiate's forehead is his or her own light in a high vibratory state and thus of 'purity'.³⁶

Alchemically speaking the person then achieves the Philosopher's Stone. Through the erotic impulse he or she has transmuted him or herself into Spiritual gold, he or she has performed his or her own hierogamy.

Turning to consider the artwork, it can be seen that the covering of the horn in gold³⁷ and the hollowness at its tip, symbolises the Spiritual 'released' state achieved by the alchemist.

From what has been said we have the association of the unicorn with love and light. This also is significant in the artwork, in which, as will be seen below, the horn searches for its own 'true nature' namely its 'origin' in a star (a source of light but also source of love) and does so out of erotic impulse.

³⁵ It is also the case that science proves this through the famous equation $E=mc^2$ that is, the interchangeability between matter and light.

³⁶ Hence the expression to become 'illuminated', to achieve 'illumination', or for instance the attainment of the Buddhist Nirvana..

³⁷ But also the prevalence of gold in the artwork as a whole. See Chapter 4 for discussion of gold in 'Materials – Gold, Silk, Glass'.

3.3 Sirius – the origin of love

The horn points at the star Sirius, aligning periodically with it, once a year. The date is that of the heliacal rising of Sirius for the city of Edinburgh, which is for 2006 the 17th of August. By heliacal rising of a celestial body is meant its simultaneous rising with the Sun's. This corresponds to the first day when the star rises with the sun far enough below the eastern horizon as to make the star visible in the morning twilight. This means that at that precise moment the two stars appear together over the eastern morning horizon. In fact Sirius's light is only seen for a few minutes just before the clarity of the rising Sun outshines its brilliance.³⁸

From the Northern hemisphere Sirius is the second brightest celestial object, only outshone by the Sun. Situated in the constellation *Canis Majoris* it is the major star in the constellation – hence its astronomical name *Alpha Canis Majoris* – its brilliance dominates the night sky in the winter Northern Hemisphere. (Rowan-Robinson, 1990).³⁹ Being 8.57 light years away, it is also one of the closest stars to the Earth. The star and our planet *approach* each other at the speed of 8 km per second. (Moore, 1996). Poetically, this would be the speed of their reciprocated desire...

The reasons to use Sirius as the star the horn in the artwork points at are twofold. From an esoteric perspective this star is the origin of love in expression on the solar system, which puts it in relation with the second ray of manifestation, Love-Wisdom; from a scientific perspective stars are the source of light in the universe, *which moves as a helix*.⁴⁰ Again I reiterate that the enquiry is being made from the perspective of the *form* of the horn, the helix. It has already been seen how the helix stands in relation with the movement of the energy of the ray of Love-Wisdom, which means that the helix's connection with love is two-fold.

Being an esoteric and inspirational source for the artwork, one of the reasons to choose Sirius as the 'target' star for the gilded horn is because this star is suggested as being the

³⁸ See Appendix A 'Sirius'.

³⁹ The Babylonians already associated Sirius with the Dog. Its name derives from the Greek *seirios* meaning 'sparkling' or 'scorching' since in the Northern hemisphere the summer heat occurred just after Sirius's heliacal rising. Its colour is white with a hint of blue when high in the celestial vault although when lower in the horizon it flickers with the colours of the rainbow. This is due to the Earth's atmosphere. (Rowan-Robinson, 1990).

⁴⁰ See Appendix B 'Light' Movement'.

source of the energy for the 'at-one-ment', which brings about self-consciousness and which is a central theme in this research.

For Bailey, Sirius is a place of consciousness. It is the source of emanating energy of the 'cosmic influences which affect the Earth, and produces results in the consciousness of man everywhere... If it might be so expressed, the energy or mind force, in its totality, reaches the solar system from a cosmic distant centre via Sirius. Sirius acts as the transmitter, or the focalising centre, whence emanate those influences which produce self-consciousness in man. (Bailey, 1992: 98).⁴¹

Self-consciousness is the knowledge of oneself. It is the result of the spiritual development carried by humanity in its successive initiations it progresses on its journey on the 'evolutionary path'.

Lucis Trust is a foundation created in 1928 by Alice Bailey, which aims at divulging and promote the teachings expounded on her literature. (Bailey, 1994). The following quote is from the organization's website:

'The heart of humanity, the heart of the planet – the Spiritual Hierarchy – and the heart of the sun create the channel which extends to Sirius, that great "star of initiation" within the universe. Sirius has a unique relationship with our planet Earth and through Sirius the pure energy of love flows through the solar centre and into the planetary heart. This alignment is evocative of the cosmic principle of Love and Freedom, both of which flow through Sirius...into our range of awareness...As we seek to work with these energies...the result should be the increasing manifestation in humanity of the principle of Love and the freeing of human life from the bonds of materialism and all that tends to imprison the human spirit.'⁴²

Sirius is therefore responsible for the Spiritualization of matter and the materialisation of Spirit. From it emanates the energy that 'demonstrates the law, order and rhythm of the creative process as it works out on the physical plane, blending Spirit and matter.'

⁴¹ Sirius is also considered as the origin of the cross as a multicultural symbol. See Chapter 4 Seal Upon Your Heart for discussion of the symbolism of the cross under the discussion of the square and associated cube.

⁴² Lucis Trust [online] <http://www.lucistrust.org/meetings/fullmoon/flyer/leoflyer.shtml>. [Accessed 15 May 2004].

(Bailey, 1991: 298-299). As we've seen above, it is the Second Ray that blends Spirit and matter (the Will and Intelligent Activity or the Father and the Mother or Osiris and Isis). From their interplay stems the Son, Love, the Second Ray with its helical movement, which aggregates the Will and the Power and thus produces form. Hence, Sirius is 'responsible' for the emergence of the Son, of the Risen Christ, of the unicorn. Therefore, being as we have seen, the unicorn the *form* of love, it is valid from an analogical perspective that its origin be the star. Sirius is thus *where the unicorn comes from and thus wishes to return to*.

From the diagram (Figure 19) and from a geometrical perspective, when two objects are in alignment, they can be seen as coinciding, depending on the position of the observer, when he or she translates his or her position from looking at the alignment from its side to its 'top'. In this sense then it is possible to reason that when aligned, Sirius *coincides* with the gilded horn. This coincidence reinforces the mingling capability of the two, thus their superimposition, their undifferentiation. This is, ultimately, this research's poetic reason for the alignment of the horn with Sirius.

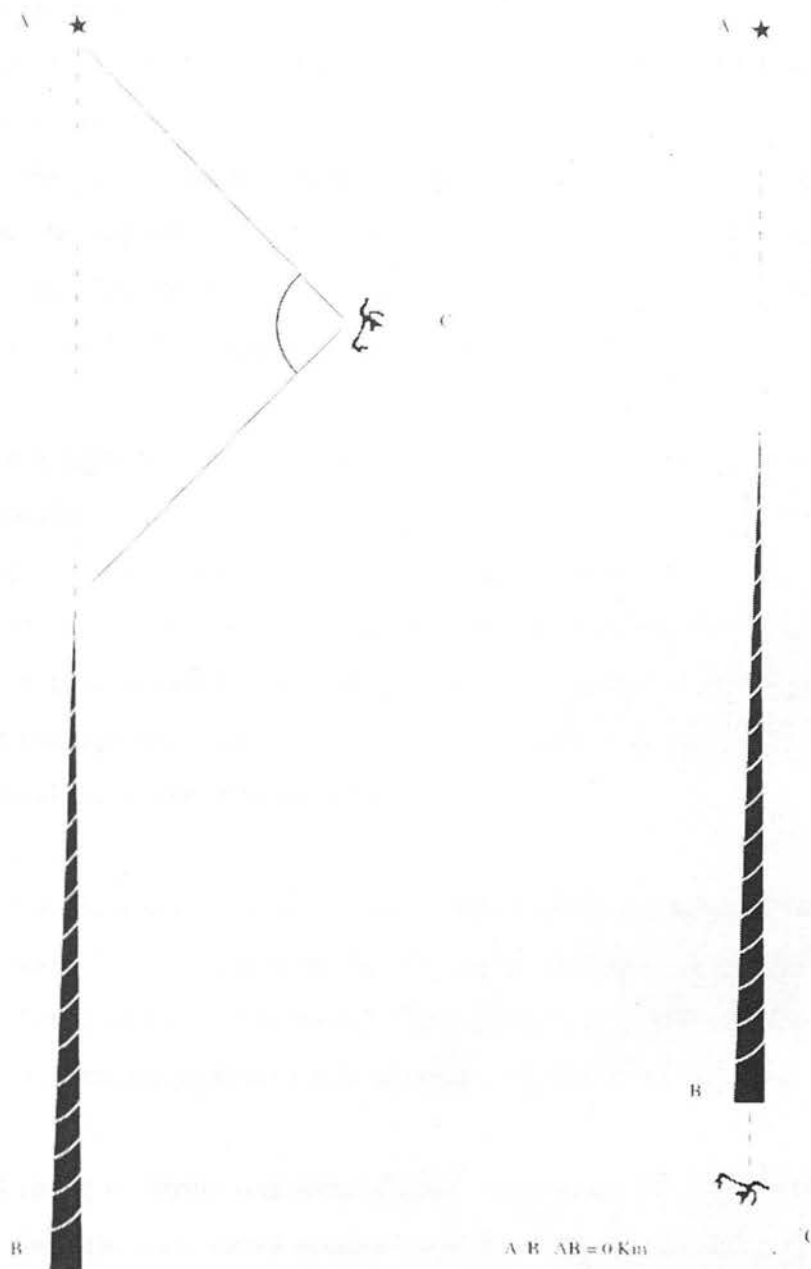


Figure 19. *Perceptive: distance.* On the case on the left the observer (C) perceives the distance between Sirius (A) and the horn's tip (B) as 8.57 light-years away or 1,286,541,682 km. On the case on the right the observer perceives the distance between A and B as coincident: 0 km.

One example in history when an alignment with the star Sirius occurs is in architectural constructions of Ancient Egypt. The goddess Isis was associated with the star Sirius, then called Sothis. Osiris and Isis formed the fundamental pair of gods in the 4th Dynasty. (David, 2002).

Isis is considered as the 'most illustrious of all Ancient Egyptian goddesses [being] depicted searching for her murdered husband Osiris, whom she restored to life with her breath. [She] became [the all-powerful Re's] equal in power...Every living being was a drop of Isis' blood... "I am the mother of the whole of Nature,... the origin and principle of the ages, the supreme divinity, the first of the dwellers in the sky."...All esoteric groups regarded her as the mystagogue who held the secrets of life and death and resurrection. [She had] boundless power.' (Chevalier, 1996: 544).

'By the Old Kingdom, solar and Osirian elements existed side by side in literature and religious practice. It was believed that the king became an Osiris at death and spells in the Pyramid Texts attempted to ensure the king's resurrection. The solar and Osirian beliefs had much in common: Osiris and Re were both nature deities, reborn either on a daily (Re) or annual (Osiris) basis; they reflected the cycle of life, death and rebirth in nature, and through their cults, this regenerative ability was transmitted to the king and eventually to all believers.' (David: 34).

Evidence of stellar alignments uniting Re or Osiris with Isis is found respectively, in the Temple of Isis at Dendera and at the Khufu⁴³ pyramid where the pharaoh, identified with Osiris, is believed to have been buried. Both deities were understood to unite with their counterpart Isis thus enacting a cosmic hierogamy giving birth to the son Horus.⁴⁴

The helical rising of Sirius was then of great importance because it coincided with the flooding of the Nile, an agrarian occurrence of the utmost importance in Egypt, and from which life was dependent. By worshipping the Sun as their fundamental deity, a solar, male deity, the Egyptians saw in the heliacal rising of Sirius, associated with the female deity, a divine hierogamy, a sexual encounter of the gods which would bring about fertility and thus the continuation of life for Egypt.

The Dendera Temple was dedicated to the goddess Isis-Hathor and aligned once a year with the helical rising of Sirius. Here is the mingling of the energies of the two deities: Re, the supreme god identified with the sun and Isis, his daughter to produce fertility. In

⁴³ 'Cheops' is the Greek name for the Egyptian 'Khufu'.

⁴⁴ This is a cosmogonic vision of the 'divine trinity', which has been referred above in the text.

one of its walls is written: 'Her majesty Isis shines into the temple on New Year's Day, she mingles her light with that of her father Re in the horizon.' (Rowan-Robinson: 23).

The temple is focused towards the inner sanctuary. As the architecture progresses deeper into the building the ceiling lowers and the floor rises. The columns which accompanied the movement towards the interior narrowed progressively so that the rays of the sun on the day of Sirius helical rising converged into the inner sanctuary or the Holy of Holies. (Tompkins, 1997).

Equally in the Khufu pyramid, the shaft pointing south of the 'Queen's chamber'⁴⁵ was aligned with Sirius at the time of its construction, circa 2500 BCE. This is interpreted by Bauval (1995) as so that the Spirit of the pharaoh, identified with Osiris, could come out and 'mingle his light' with that of the goddess. The signification of this alignment seems also to be connected with the necessary periodic re-fertilization of the land. Accordingly, by 2500 BCE, Sirius culminated⁴⁶ on the 12th of September and then her 'insemination' by Osiris would occur. Approximately nine months later, on the 5th of July the flooding of the Nile would occur, bringing with it the beginning of the new life, which was associated with the rebirth of Horus, the pharaoh, and thus Egypt.

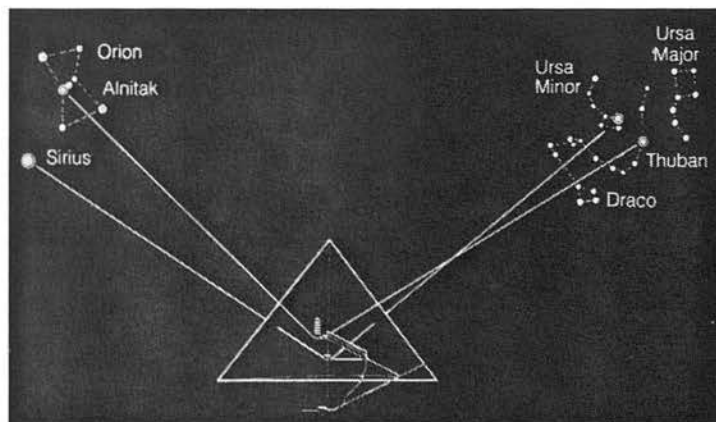


Figure 20. Orientation of the four shafts in the Khufu pyramid.

⁴⁵ The Queens' chamber is situated at exactly the centre of the pyramid. South was the main direction for the Egyptians, the area of the sky which was travelled by the sun in its daily and annual celestial progression. It is towards south that Sirius can be found, following the direction to the left indicated by the three stars forming Orion's belt. Orion was a fundamental constellation for the Ancient Egyptians, who identified it with Osiris. The south starshaft originating at King's Chamber likewise points south to the star Alnitak of Orion's belt. (Figure 17).

⁴⁶ Culmination is the point at which a star or planet reaches its highest point in the sky.

In both cases what we have is a cosmic, divine hierogamy in which what is at stake is the continuation of life.

The way in which this hierogamy could be observed and made to occur was, in one case by seeing it happening in the Dendera case (being a temple) and by making it happen in the Khufu's case (being a tomb for the pharaoh.) In the later case the Soul of the pharaoh would *escape* through the shaft; in the former the sun, i.e. Re, would *enter* the temple at the same time as Sirius elevated 'herself' in the horizon. In any case the result is the encounter and mingling of the two.

This was done through an establishment of stellar alignments, today studied by archaeoastronomy. Archaeoastronomy is the scientific study of ancient architectural sites, which show convincing evidence of deliberate alignments to astronomical phenomena such as solstice and equinox sunrises, moonrises and moonsets and also to stars and planets. Albeit in most cases the absence of documentary records will leave the precise reason for their use an open question, archaeoastronomy considers reasonable the hypothesizing that their purpose would be to ensure, in different ways, the continuity of seasonal cycles, often with an underlying emphasis on fertility.

It is generally accepted that the constructors of these sites held the belief of the divinity of the celestial bodies and occurrences. For these cultures the renewal of life was fundamental to ensure its continuation and thus the survival of the people. Many of these are understood to have served the dual purpose of calendars and also worship places.⁴⁷

The aim of such alignments seems thus to serve calendrical purposes but could also be, from the point of view of a *magical* perspective, which the Egyptians certainly embraced, to assure the fertilizing hierogamy. Magic is *operative*, understood as the manipulation of energies to bring about a desired outcome. Here the establishment of the right orientation of the temple and the tomb so that the energies (the 'light') of the two celestial bodies could merge and thus produce its effect as flooding.

As we have seen in Figure 19, in a projection, when rotating the observer's point there is coincidence between the original and its image. The projecting vectors transform

⁴⁷ In any case, to be scientifically accepted, alignments have to show evidence of intent and it is important to remain sceptical until evidence proves the hypothesis. (Cornelis, 1996).

themselves into the points of projection, thus creating the coincidence. In the cases referred above the channel through which that was possible to occur (here associated with the vector of projection), was through the shaft in the pyramid and the corridor of columns in the Dendera Temple.

Alignment was thus in the Osiris-Isis case understood as the blending of energies in the sky which would have a practical effect on earth. From the magical point of view, humans (earth bound) were, by observing the celestial hierogamy, commemorating it and in doing so also assuring their own survival. In any case the relation was between the sky (where the encounter was taking place), and the earth (where it was being observed and where the hierogamy would have its effect in the renewal of life). This is a creative, vitality-giving dispensation of energies which might possibly be the reason why these alignments were used, for the establishment of the uninterrupted flow of energies connecting the 'above' and the 'below'.

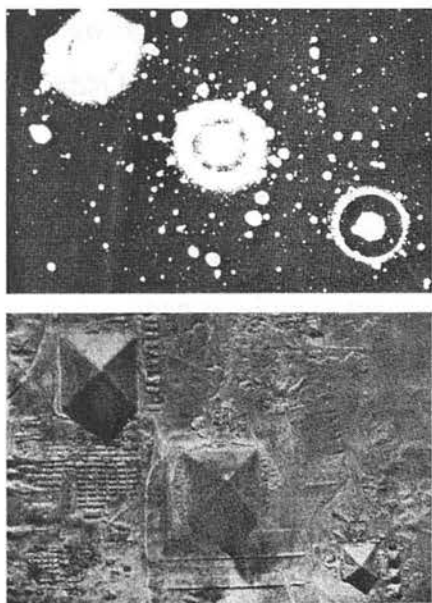


Figure 21. Orion's Belt stars in relation with Giza's pyramids overhead.

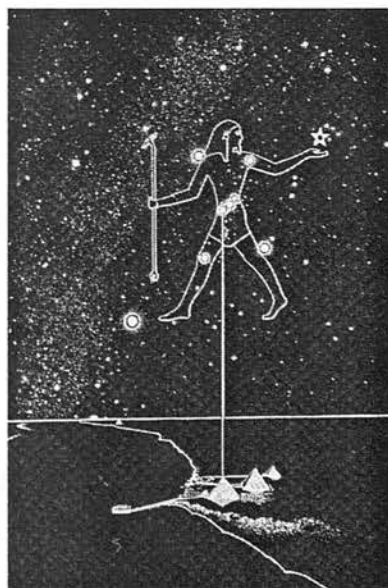


Figure 22. Artistic rendition of the relation between Orion's belt and the vertical projection from the Khufu pyramid.

'Don't you know oh Asclepius that Egypt is the projection of heaven on Earth.'
(Burckhardt, 1967: 27).

This mirrors the erotic interplay, discussed above, between the Rays of Manifestation in the interaction between the first aspect of the Trinity and the third. But there is also another connection that can be established and which I have used to arrive at the conclusions on the possible *reality* of the dispensation of energies between the sky and the earth as an operative outcome.

Above in the text, 'at-one-ment' has been referred, from an esoteric point of view, as the effected 'correct *alignment*' between the distinct bodies of the individual. It is a 'synthesis of energies'. (Bailey, 1981: 275). Then the being realises its integrity, its wholeness. According to Bailey:

'Man is ... a mass of conflicting energies and an active centre of moving forces with a shift of emphasis constantly going on, and with the aggregation of the numerous streams of energy presenting a ... kaleidoscope of active inter-relations, interpenetration, internecine warfare, and interdependence until such time as the Personality forces (symbolic of divine multiplicity) are subdued or "brought into line"[thus creating a harmonious relationship, a "correct relation" (Bailey, 1981:274)] by the dominant Soul. This is what [is meant] by the word "alignment". This alignment results from:

1. the control of the Personality by the Soul
2. the downpouring of Soul energy, via the mental and the emotional bodies, into the brain, thus producing the subjugation of the lower nature, the awakening of the brain consciousness to Soul awareness, and a new alignment of the bodies
3. the right arrangement ... of the energies which are motivating and dynamically arousing the centres into activity. This leads eventually to a direct alignment of the centres upon the spine [the chakras, helices of energy in activity from the etheric body upwards], so that Soul energy can pass up and down through the centres from the directing centre in the head.

...Eventually, the monadic ray takes control, absorbing into itself the rays of the Personality and of the Soul (at the third and fifth initiations⁴⁸) and thus duality is finally and definitely overcome and "only the *One Who Is* remains". (Bailey, 1995: 340-341).

⁴⁸ The third initiation being the one which brings about the 'unicorn of God' and the fifth as the one which is directly ruled by Sirius or admits the person as adept into the Sirian state of consciousness. 'The fifth initiation corresponds to the first cosmic initiation, that of 'entered apprentice' of the lodge on Sirius. A

Alignment is thus the outcome of an operation of *bringing together*. In the Osiris/Isis duo the result is the fertilization of the land, in the spiritualised human the protruding of the helix of vitality. In both cases the alignment is a product of the erotic encounter between sky and earth, between Spirit and matter, between the *lovers*. In the case of the human being's alignment the result is an expansion of consciousness, which is itself vitality, life. (This works in tandem with the result of the Osiris/Isis alignment.) This is because 'real' life is understood to reside in the Spirit (i.e., in the Monad), that life which actually underpins and invigorates all the subtle bodies which emanate from it downwards to the physical one. In at-one-ment, life expresses itself in full potency and *reality*.

The point being made in this text is the extrapolation from alignment in the esoteric definition being the uninterrupted energetic connection between the 'low' and the 'high' in a fertilising, vital connection. It is therefore analogically reasonable to consider that the aim of the Osiris/Isis alignment was to establish an interrupted energetic flow from heaven to earth of the qualities of Sirius/Isis. The earth was inseminated by an energetic capacity travelling through space, contained within the light emanating from the star. Hermetic thought having its origins in Egypt, it is possible that the love stemming from the heart of Sirius was known of by then...

This suggestion is present in the poetic arrangement in the artwork. In the *possibility* of the horn, when in alignment with Sirius receiving its influence and thus creating an uninterrupted beam of love connecting the earth and the sky and then spreading its influence, inseminating the earth with love...

In the artwork we thus also have the 'above' and the 'below' connecting. Alchemically speaking, the macrocosm is *en rapport* with the microcosm. In it this link is established because the gilded horn is the 'loved'. It searches for its counterpart, its 'lover' in the sky and then blends with it. In this case the lover is the origin of love itself. They establish a relationship of *knowledge* of each other thus they *coincide* in an erotic embrace.⁴⁹

Master, therefore, is one who has taken the seventh planetary initiation, the fifth solar initiation, and the first Sirian or cosmic initiation.' (Bailey, 1992: 18).

⁴⁹ See Chapters 4 Seal Upon Your Heart '*Vena Amoris*' and 5 Saudade for the Future 'The ontological journey'.

The date chosen for the alignment of Sirius and the horn is that of the helical rising of Sirius in Edinburgh. This is because, according to the Ancient Egyptians, that was the date for the hierogamy between the sun and the star. It was then when the energies would creatively mingle and project the product of their encounter onto the earth. The artwork is thus a sort of re-enactment of this.

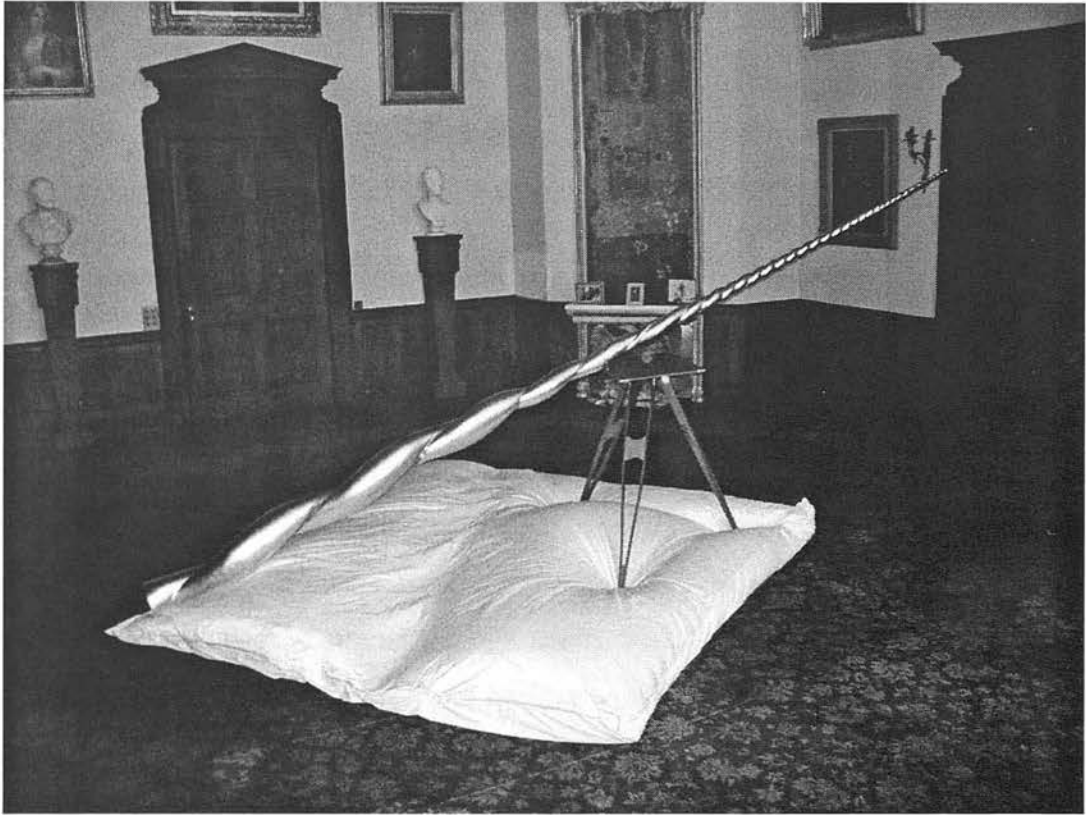


Figure 23. *Aveo Amor*. Marked on the pillow, the alignment with the rising of Sirius on the day of its helical rising.

If the above connection between the gilded horn and Sirius can be understood as a rapport established at an *ontological* level (the level of the nature of things) it moreover has a *formal* link with the star. This is because optics shows how light moves as a helix.⁵⁰ What this means in terms of the artwork is that the gilded horn searches for the origin of its own form, the helix in light. Thus, poetically speaking, when the horn and the star align a ray of love and light is established.

⁵⁰ See Appendix B 'Light's Movement'.

Another branch of science - biology - further corroborates this essential link between the helix and life through the agency of love. I am referring to the DNA molecule⁵¹. Upon discovering the helical structure of DNA, Francis Crick has reputedly cried out, 'We have discovered the secret of life!' (Anson, 1999: 321).

In its helical shape, the molecule carries within the information that transmits the data necessary for the storage, expression and transmission of genetic material. In this helix is contained *the* biological inheritance. It is the fundamental shape of life and the continuation of it. The operating agent is love, the attracting, binding and bonding energy that approaches the parents and thus create, at the biological level, the conception and later on the birth of the child.

From the stars emanates the light that shines across sidereal space. From stars emanates life as it pulsates in the solar system. In them matter – interchangeable with light, so the General Theory of Relativity demonstrates by its famous equation $E=mc^2$ – has its origin. From stellar explosion the basic constituents of matter have spread across space, thus creating the universe. Humans are literally the dust of stars. They are thus particles of stars which having been scattered through space, have gathered themselves in the human form. Therefore stars are the origin of humans – stars are *home*, we are in essence stars, they are where we belong. Stars are, at the very end of days, where we might wish to return to. This would therefore be the ultimate journey back home. In this sense, we wish to return to the light from where, *in illo tempore*, we have emanated from.

Following the analogical premise that is being used, what the above reveals, is the centrality of the helix in the expression of the *form* of life: as its source (in light), in its continuation (in DNA), as humanity's spiritual teleology, its final aim, achieved (in the unicorn's horn). And, uniting them all, as the fundamental shape responsible for the *appearing* of all the others – love.

⁵¹DNA stands for Deoxyribonucleic acid. DNA is a complex giant molecule that contains, in chemically coded form, the information needed for a cell to make proteins. DNA is a ladder like double-structured nucleic acid, which forms the basis of inheritance in all organisms. Nucleic acid is responsible for the storage, expression and transmission of genetic information. DNA consists of a double helix consisting of two parallel chains of alternate sugar and phosphate linked by pairs of organic bases. It is organised in chromosomes – a rod-shaped structure in a cell nucleus carrying the genes that determine the sex and the characteristics an organism inherits from its parents -- and, in organisms other than bacteria, it is found only in the cell's nucleus. In DNA is stored the genetic information of a living organism. (Vander, 1990).

The helix reveals its presence throughout manifestation, in its enfoldment and teleology. That the helix appears in all the stages of life expresses its fundamentality in its most intimate expression. Therefore the unicorn can be interpreted as a creature symbol of the fundamentals and revelation of life itself.

3.4 Octagon – a symbolic approach

The relevant aspect here being considered is the presentation of the artwork in an octagonal shaped room⁵². This room corresponds to the exact geometrical centre of Gosford House, which is itself built in topographical alignment with Edinburgh Castle in Scotland's capital city.⁵³

The house faces West-West-Northwest, standing on a latitude 55° 59' 52'' North, longitude 2° 52' 33'' West. The exact middle point of the house is the axis passing through the centre of the octagonal room.⁵⁴

It is a project of the architect Robert Adam (1728-1792) and construction was started in 1790 by Francis Charters, the 7th Earl of Wemyss. It was a specification of its builder that the house be in alignment with Edinburgh's Royal Mile and he was actively engaged in the planning of the house.



Figure 24. Gosford House, East Lothian.

⁵² The room is itself not an absolutely precise octagon, however it is called 'the octagon' by the owners of the house. Nevertheless, its tendency for the perfect octagonal shape and its name is enough to justify the relationships that ensue.

⁵³ The relationships this alignment suggests are interesting but for the purposes of this research they will not be considered.

⁵⁴ The measures of the room are: main door to window: 9.2m x 10m (30ft x 33ft); fireplaces to gilded mirrors: 8.8 metres (29ft).

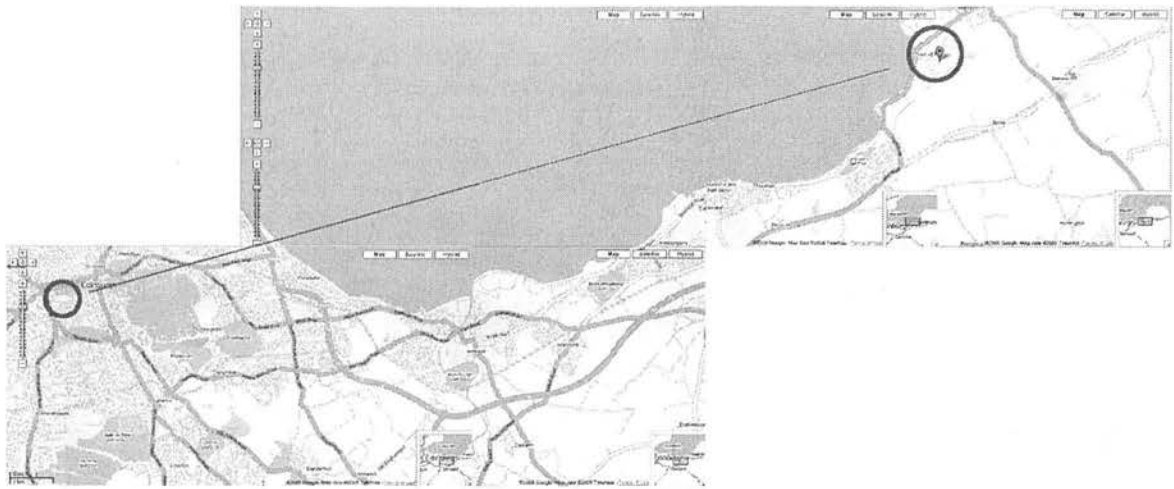


Figure 25. Geographical relation between Gosford House and Edinburgh's Castle.

The reasons why this particular geographic relation was chosen are likely to concern with the spirit of the last half of the 18th Century. The establishing of geographical or architectural alignments was a common practice at the time of the building of the house, the time of the Scottish Enlightenment, which stretched approximately from 1740 to 1790. Architecture was at the time dominated by Classicism and, as exemplified by the perpendicular grid of the New Town's plan in Edinburgh, orthogonality was fashionable. (Glendinning, 2004). Hence, the straight line that unites the centre of Gosford house with the centre of the castle can be seen to fit within the aesthetic spirit of the time.

The original plans for the Octagon show a room tending to a circle, (Figure 26) its regularity broken by four fireplaces, facing each other in pairs. Today, the room's closer proximity to a regular octagon is due to the 7th Earl's direct intervention in the building. Francis Charters seems to have been reputedly keen on octagonal and pyramidal shapes⁵⁵. It is reasonable to assume, as the Countess of Wemyss has confirmed, that having been a Freemason, the Earl was aware of the symbolic significance of the forms.

⁵⁵ He is actually buried in the grounds of Gosford House in a mausoleum in the shape of a pyramid.

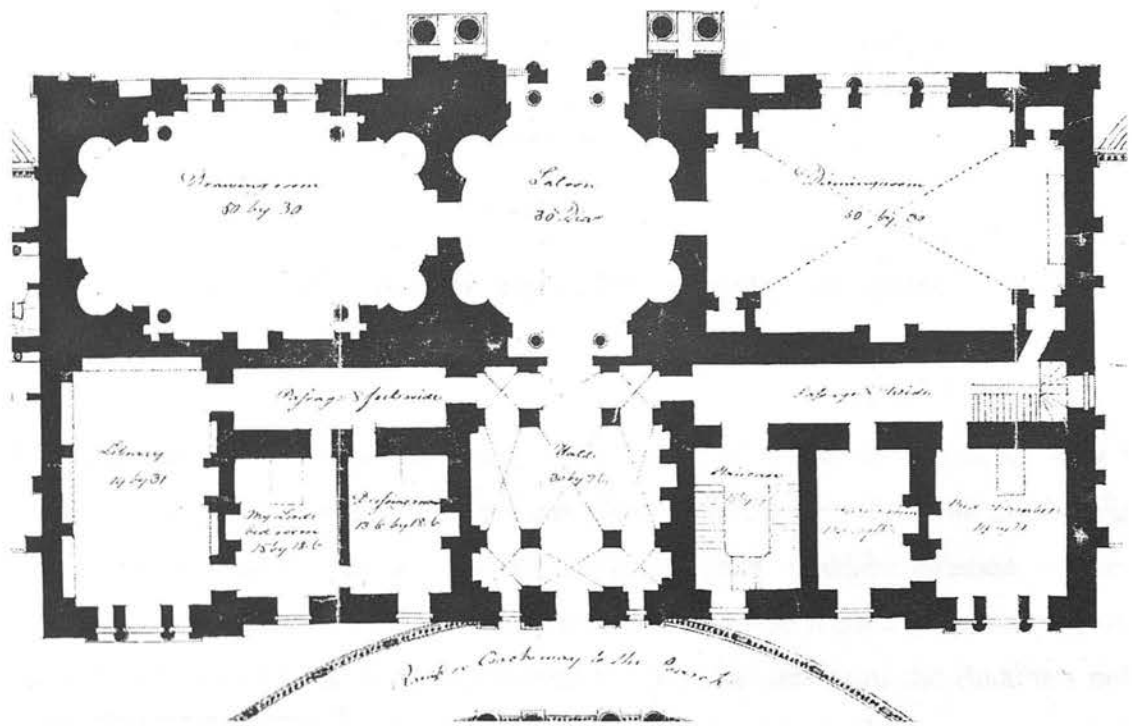
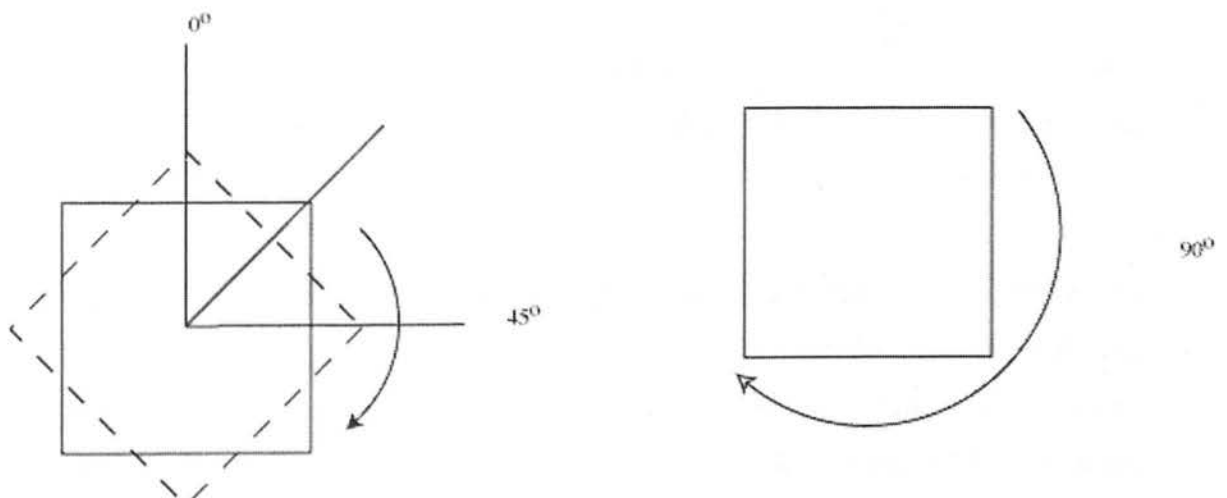


Figure 26. Robert Adam's Gosford's architectural plan, 1790.

When considering a geometrical form from its symbolical angle there are two aspects which contribute to its signification: the geometrical shape, taking in to account the construction process and its final form, and its associated number. In this case the square, its rotation by 45° giving origin to the octagon, and the associated number eight.



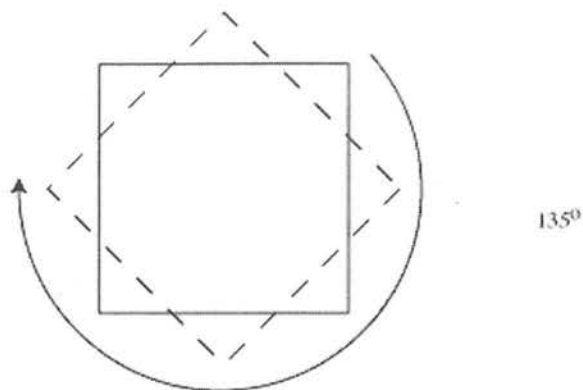


Figure 27. The three stages of the rotation of the square.

‘[Eight] appears as a second beginning, on a higher level, the fulfilment of what the heptad [number seven] had prepared and completed.’ (Schimmel: 158). But number eight appears cross-culturally as a number identified with transubstantiation (mithraic mysteries), regeneration (Christian and Jewish tradition), resurrection (Christianity). And also as Paradise (Sufi), the stages of human life (Confucianism) or the Buddha’s noble eightfold path. ‘It seems that the eightfold division of the path that leads to eternal bliss is a rather universal concept.’ (Schimmel: 159).

Number eight and the octagonal shape are thus respectively understood as the number and form that are symbolically ‘associated with resurrection’. (Chevalier, 1996: 710). They reveal ‘a dynamic image of a dialectic between the transcendent and the heavenly, to which humans naturally aspire, and the earthly which is their present location’. (Chevalier, 1996: 912) – it is a *mélange* of material and spiritual aspects.

The key to understanding the symbol is in the construction of the form. This is indicated in the geometrical process of the construction of the octagon, which is a form that oscillates between the square and its doubling by rotation, the octagon (Figure 27).

The square symbolises earth and earth-bound phenomena, whereas the circle represents that which is characteristic of the spirit. The square, and thus the number four from which it is associated, is connected to the four spatial dimensions, height, length, depth and breadth and ‘almost all of the aspects of four lead back to some relation with the materially established world.’ (Schimmel: 90).

‘[Square is a] symbol of Earth as opposed to Heaven, but as well and upon another level, it is the symbol for the created [‘incarnated’] universe as opposed to the uncreated and to the creator. The square is a positively static shape, its four corners firmly moored. It symbolises the halt or pause. Implicit in the square is the notion of stagnation and solidification, even of becoming permanently set in perfection, as in the case of the Heavenly Jerusalem.’ (Chevalier, 1996: 912).⁵⁶

As a static form, the square by itself does not possess movement. The octagon as *rotated* square has borrowed from the circle its rotational momentum. Thus from this perspective, the octagon presents the *blended characteristics* of both the square and the circle. It however is not a square that has become circle or vice-versa – the octagon still keeps the qualities of *both* the square and the circle in one form which clearly displays the qualities of both those which have given origin to it.

Movement is becoming. In order to become it is necessary to move – in the circle resides the nature of movement. ‘Circular motion is perfect, immutable, without beginning nor end or variation. From this it is a short step to make it a symbol of time. Time, “the turning of the wheel,” (Chevalier, 1996: 197) may be defined as continuous and invariable succession of instants.’ (Chevalier, 1996: 195).

As symbol of resurrection⁵⁷, this can be indicated by the three moments that comprise the original square, the doubled, rotated square in the form of the octagon and then, keeping the rotational movement, from 45° to 90°, the coming back to the square form once more. (The word ‘resuscitate’ containing the notion of movement!) That is, to start from a square, from the material, the incarnated, rotating it by 45° to a double square — the octagon – by the action of the circle turning the material into the spiritual – the non-incarnated. And then, by keeping rotating the square, the resurrection. That is, from incarnated (0°) to non-incarnated (45°) back to incarnation (90°)!⁵⁸ It is possible to keep rotating the square *ad infinitum*. (Figure 27).

⁵⁶ For development of the discussion of ‘square’ see Chapter 4 Seal Upon Your Heart, ‘Cube – anagoria from the centre of the cross’.

⁵⁷ ‘Resurrection’: from Latin ‘cite’- effective base is Latin *ciere*, *to set in motion* [my italics], akin to Greek *kiein*, whence *kinein*, to move. ‘Suscitare’ (*sus-* for *sub*, under), to raise. Its re-‘again’ cpd *resuscitare*, to raise again, hence to restore or revive, has pp *resuscitatus*, hence ‘to resuscitate’. (Partridge: 560).

⁵⁸ ‘Incarnate’ from Latin *carnificare*: *carni-* c/f of Latin ‘caro’ (gen *carmis*), flesh + *fiacre*, a c/f of *facere*, to make. ‘Incarnare’ itself from *incarnatur*, pp of *incarnare*, to invest with flesh. (Partridge: 307).

0° and 90° coincide with the return to life-manifested, which is the incarnation, the coming back from 'the dead', from the non-material. From 'non-carnate' to 'incarnate'.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Lima de Freitas, calls the octagon the 'resurrection' and the 'bearer of light'. In his book *515 O Lugar do Espelho* (2003) he makes a study on the signification and symbology of angles. From the angular perspective (which he defines as a *goneological* enquiry) the author establishes very interesting connections between the regular inscribed pentagon and the regular inscribed octagon. The connections are made from the perspective of the sum of the internal angles of the inscribed octagon ($360^\circ \times 2 = 720^\circ$) and the angle 108° , which appears in the inscribed pentagon.

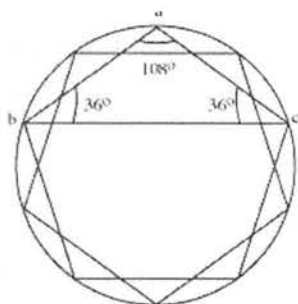
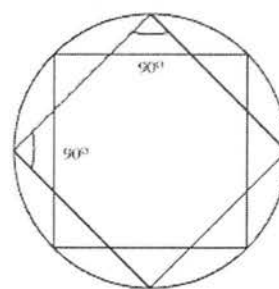


Figure 28. Double pentagon, 'masculine' and 'feminine', with Shinning Delta at the top: triangle *abc*. Figure 29. 45° rotated square as inscribed octagonal star. $90^\circ \times 8 = 720^\circ$.



The author finds this relationship of the utmost relevance. He first considers the double pentagon inscribed in the circle, a figure of ten sides. One pentagon representing the male principle, and the other, inverted in relation to the first, standing for the female principle. Each pentagon represents the aspects of an already perfected nature. (The pentagon is associated with the Spiritualised humanity, that is, with the one who has acquired the *quintessence* – this is represented in Leonardo's famous Vitruvian man - the Spiritualization of matter and the materialisation of the Spirit. Lima de Freitas refers Christ's coming into the world only being conceivable in the 'perfection of the flesh', the same perfection symbolically expressed by the regular pentagon). The author therefore considers the figure of the double pentagon, the ten-sided inscribed polygon in the image of the male and female principles (each an inverted reflection of the other) as expression of the *hierosgamos* that is, of the balance and equilibrium between the two. In the anthropomorphic 'male' pentagon (the upright pentagon) the triangle on top represents the 'head'. This was designated by Freemasonry as the 'Shinning Delta'. (Fig.24). On it, the angle on the vertex is 108° . The 'shining delta' has therefore the other two angles each of 36° each, which sum up 72° . It becomes immediately clear that the upper vertex is triadic, because it is divisible by 3 into 36 ($3 \times 36 = 108$). Being triadic, it immediately connects with the Divine Trinity to which allusion has been made up in the main text. At the same time the base of the same triangle is binary (2×36) and the whole represents a division of 180° (which is the invariable value of the sum of the internal angles of a triangle) by 5: $(3 \times 36) + (2 \times 36) = 180$. The sum of the two vertices of the base of the 'shinning delta' is thus 72° ($2 \times 36^\circ$). The author, through a thorough geometrical and analogical analysis finds that in this angle of 72° symbolically resides the evidence of 'the polarization of the sexes' (p.139), sex here understood as fundamental dual principle. In English Freemasonry, the author continues, the number 720 (a number multiplied by 10 or multiples of 10 is considered to maintain its essential qualities and integrity, thus making them equivalent (Schimmel, 1993)) constituted the answer to the question relative to the 'cable-tow', term which apparently evoked an 'initiativ compromise' (p.142). 'The number 720...transforms itself in the number of divine refraction offered to Humanity' (p.142). 'The shining delta contains the female and male polarisation in their archetypal perfection... it therefore represents the perfect human model.' (p.144).

I recall here that 720 is the sum of the internal angles of the inscribed pentagonal star ($2 \times 360^\circ$). Lima de Freitas continues: '72 expresses the descent of the divine Verb and Its horizontal dissemination through the world, at the same time that it expresses the world itself.' (p.155). This will thus correspond to the 'divine sacrifice', that is, 'God's death': it encapsulates the division of the divinity 'in pieces'. (p.156). However the death of the god is only an episode in the myth; the other moment, of transcendental importance, is that of the resurrection. This resurrection is the opposing movement to that of the descent and of the sacrifice, now moving towards the top pole corresponding to the Spirit. It is an ascending and

As referred, the rotation of the circle suggests time. This means that the passage from 'incarnated' to 'non-incarnated' signifies a *journey*, a movement, which is responsible for bringing about a translation of the original form and *energises* it by the movement. Accordingly, *journeywise*, in its successive 'reincarnations', one square is the intermediate of the other. If one square can be considered as an entity, then the second square is its mirror in a 'rotated', thus energised, aspect. It is the mirroring of the same entity in a 'higher' *octave*⁶⁰. It can be assumed that every time the square rotates it raises its vibration, given by the energy of the rotation itself. It can be thus compared to the being moving in a *helical* movement, therefore every time as the rotation keeps unfolding, 'closer to its spirit'.

This both colours the artwork within the room and also matches the theme of the work, which is the relationship between the spiritualization of matter and the materialisation of the Spirit. Thus the work being in an octagonal room reiterates and reinforces the intended meaning behind the artwork at the same time that it shows the adequateness between the space of exhibition and the work itself. It likewise expresses a relationship

resurrectional movement... It is this ascending and resurrectional movement that finds its numerological expression in the shining delta, in the value of its uppermost vertex, 108° . It is therefore legitimate to suggest that this number must be connected, in the traditional, *vide* Christian iconography, to the metaphysical negation of death by the triumph of the Spirit, to the mysteries of divine resurrection and, by extension, to the resurrection of the flesh. And also to the reintegration of humanity in the archetype which situates it in the dimension beyond time, that is, the 'Eternal Christ' (p.156). The sum of the double inscribed pentagonal star is 1080° . And the sum of the internal angles of the inscribed *octagon* is also 1080° ($8 \times 135^\circ$)!

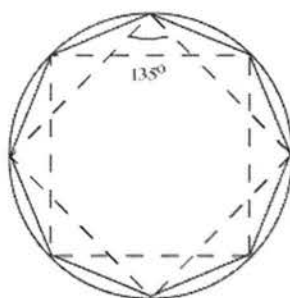


Figure 30. Inscribed octagon and octagonal star.

Compare this with the image of the *Christus Resurrectus* from the *Rosarium Philosophorum* (Figure 12): the *laborum* or pole he carries on his hand makes with the horizontal line of the tomb from where he exits an angle of 108° , symbolically equivalent with 1080. (p.158-160).

⁶⁰ Here I am borrowing a musical analogy that suggests the note at each end of a complete cycle in the diatonical scale, specially the higher one, considered in relation to the equivalent note at the other end of the scale.

between an 'interior' nature and an 'exterior' one. This is present in the horn being inside the house and searching for something outside it.⁶¹

That which has been discussed in this chapter suggests the following thoughts as a sort of interim conclusion:

Life is love or exists because of love, when two separate entities come together to create another, which is something else rather than themselves. From this point of view the 'parents' exist one outside the other. Through the agency of love they bridge their relative exteriority and thus align, then producing a living form, product of their erotic encounter. The helix is both the result of their love but is also the symbolic expression of their desire for each other. In the case of the artwork this encounter takes place inside the octagon. The octagon, by the character of periodicity it contains in the alternation between matter and Spirit, reinforces the principle of the movement that oscillates between the coming together and the moving apart. From body to Spirit and vice-versa, dying and resurrecting, and then re-enacting the process *ad infinitum*. The helix is an expression of the quality of love that energises and creates the movement between incarnation and spiritualization, between the encounter and the separation of the mother and the father, the lovers, between the interior and the exterior of the being.

⁶¹ This relationship is present in the house's alignment with the castle, that is, its relation with something which is outside itself. The inside-outside aspect further connects with the dress in Saudade for the Future being presented turned inside-out, the rings likewise establishing an association between their interior and exterior surfaces, and also the relations of reversal present in the casting process. For development on these relations see Chapter 4 Seal Upon Your Heart 'Touch – casting'.

Chapter 4: Seal Upon Your Heart

This chapter deals with the contextual material for the piece Seal Upon Your Heart. It is divided as follows:

- a) Sculptural Processes
 - a. Description
 - b. Foundational image
- b) *Vena Amoris* – the vein of love
- c) Cube – anagoria from the centre of the cross
- d) Touch – Casting
- e) Materials – Gold, Silk, Glass

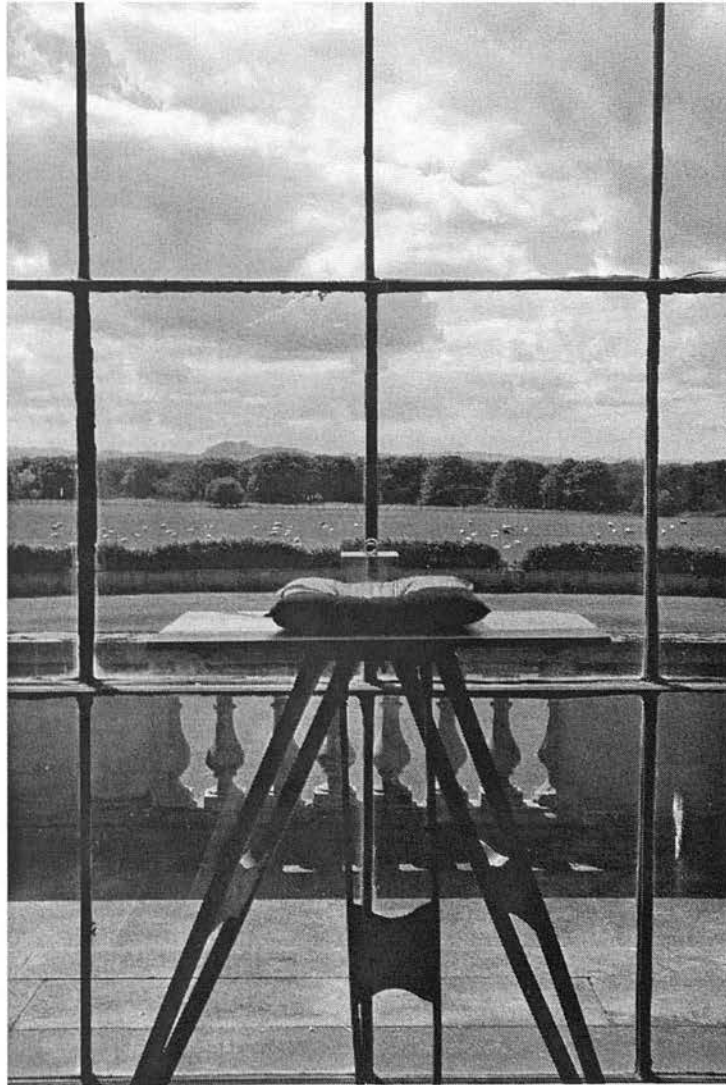


Figure 31. Seal Upon Your Heart (2006). Set in alignment with Edinburgh's Royal Mile.



Figure 32. *Seal Upon Your Heart* (2006)

4.1 Sculptural Processes

4.1.1 Description

The work consists of silver cast gold-plated rings of the third fingers of a man and a woman's hand placed one inside the other and positioned on a crystal cube with a side of 8 centimetres. The 'male' ring has the skin cast on its interior surface and the 'female' ring has the skin cast on its external one. The contours of both casts fit exactly. On two orthogonal faces of the cube are two skin prints using only the skin's oils. The crystal cube rests on a red silk pillow, which lies on top of a plane table. The work is placed at

the centre of the octagon room's window, thus brought into line with the alignment of Gosford House itself.

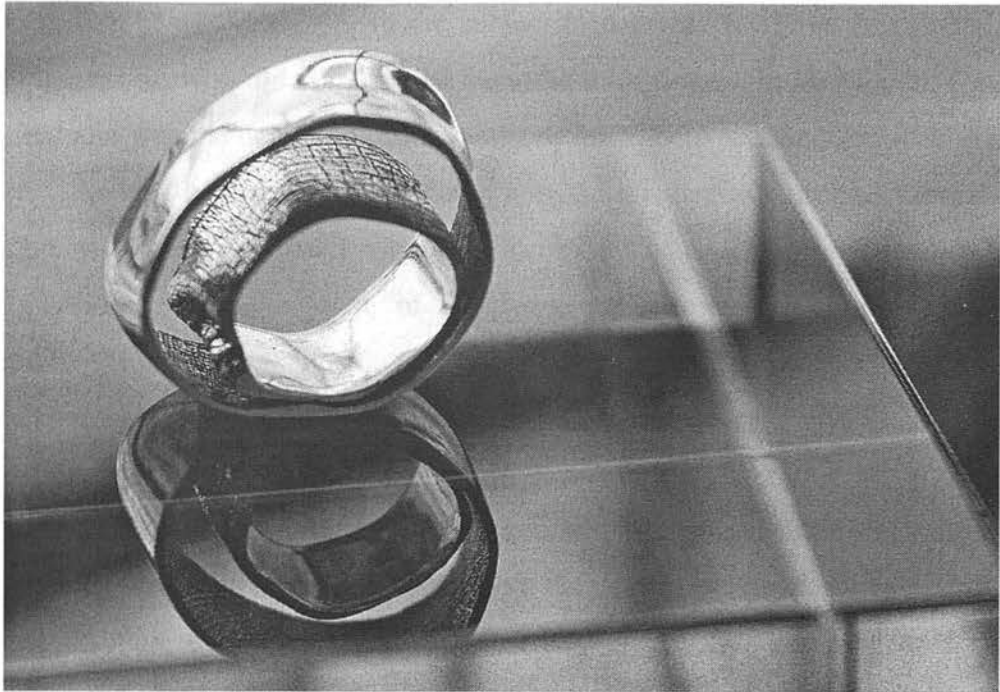


Figure 33. *Seal Upon Your Heart*, detail.

4.1.2 Foundational image

Seal Upon Your Heart is a development of an earlier work entitled *Extension of the Many Above* (1998) (Figure 4), which consists of two circular bands also cast from the left ring fingers of a man and a woman, two lovers. Here the two bands or rings are joined at the external surfaces thus creating the form of the infinity sign.⁶² The external surface is smooth whereas the internal surfaces contain the casts of the fingers' skin.

Indeed the cast *in simultaneous* of both fingers registers the physical consequences of their touch. This was one of the aims of the later version, which departs from the previous cast. In the earlier object, the original finger casts were made separately, thus maintaining the undistorted form of the fingers.

Also the later object is set apart from the earlier one by means of the relative position of the two rings, where the narrower ring is placed inside the wider one in a reciprocal

⁶² Thus its title *Extension of the Many Above*, related to the meaning of the infinity sign. For distinction between 'symbol' and 'sign' see Chapter 2 'Methods and Processes'.

fitting. This exact formal correspondence is possible due to the original cast having been taken when the fingers of the two people were pressing against each other.⁶³

If for Extension of the Many Above the subject matter was 'marriage' (expressed by the placing together of two golden rings cast from the third finger), in Seal Upon Your Heart the original aim was the depiction of the *amorous touch* between the lovers⁶⁴ in a bond of marriage. As will be seen below this aim would be understood as unachievable – the representation of *the touch itself* – only its formal effect could be captured. What was reached, however, was the sense of the *image* of the lovers' intimate relationship suggested by the final form. The fact that the rings exactly fit in juxtaposition but are not fused together is relevant.

A support or plinth for the presentation of the rings proved necessary. It arrived in the form of a cubic shaped crystal. The plinth both singles out the object placed on the plane table's surface and, certainly more significantly, confers added meaning to it. In fact, Seal Upon Your Heart is (excepting its contextual placing in the exhibition space⁶⁵) one object comprising of the two cast bands and the cube where they stand.⁶⁶ This is the signification of the pillow where the whole object rests.

The materials used – gold, silk, and glass – confer significance to the artwork. They share a symbolic meaning as will be seen below in the text.

'Vena Amoris' – the vein of love

Seal Upon Your Heart is the image of the *amorous touch* between two lovers in the bonds of marriage. 'Marriage' is here both the image of the joining of two lovers and of being with itself, with its 'true' nature.

⁶³ The origin cast was taken in rubber. See down in the Appendix E 'Construction of the horn, rings, and buttons'.

⁶⁴ Technically I was at the time attempting at solving the particular technical challenges of setting in a cast the touch between two people.

⁶⁵ See Chapter 3 Aveo Amor 'Octagon' for exhibition space conference of meaning.

⁶⁶ As Aveo Amor is comprised by the horn and its relationship with Sirius and not the horn on its own.

This is represented in the form of two golden bands which are, in the case of the cast artwork, associated with wedding rings. 'To place [a ring] on somebody else's [finger] is...to accept it from someone else as a treasure kept [in] mutual [sharing].' (Chevalier, 1996: 807).

From a symbolic point of view, a ring essentially displays 'links and bonding...In the Christian tradition [it] symbolises faithful affection freely given.' (Chevalier, 1996: 806-807). It is therefore a symbol of attachment and union taken voluntarily. Its circular shape indicates the timelessness and inseparability of the vow taken upon receiving it. By their uninterrupted circularity, rings are thus 'linked to time and the cosmos'. (Chevalier, 1996: 806). The endlessness of a ring but also its inseparable interior and exterior surfaces suggest the nature of the eternal quality of the bond.

The two surfaces are inseparable yet they are distinct. This is significant in the artwork in that each ring corresponds to each individual, when placed together in intimate contact the two are not fused together. Each ring keeps its *distinctness*. This reinforces the *voluntary* character expressed in the Christian tradition of the vow of the bond taken. The open centre has been interpreted as 'a doorway to things unknown'⁶⁷ but in this artwork it signifies the spiritual *release* occurring in the bond and as a consequence of the encounter, i.e., their hierogamy achieved.

Wedding rings are traditionally made of gold because that material, in expressing eternity and immutability in itself, lends its signification to the vow of love between the two people, thus rendering the vow eternal and immutable. ⁶⁸ These 'absolute', 'eternal' qualities are reinforced by the circularity of the ring and the gold. Gold and circularity associated with things eternal, immutable, thus perfect.

Wedding rings are traditionally used on the third finger of the left hand because a 'vein of love', the *vena amoris*, is said to connect this finger directly with the heart.

The tradition reputedly originates in Ancient Egypt, was taken up by Alexander the Great when he conquered Egypt and then passed into Roman custom and from there to all

⁶⁷ Wikipedia, entry for Vena Amoris [online] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vena_amoris. [Accessed February 2006].

⁶⁸ See further down this Chapter 'Materials – Gold, Silk, Glass' for discussion of the meaning and significances of gold.

Christianity. This custom was first reported by Apion, a First Century CE grammarian from Alexandria⁶⁹.

The heart was for the Ancient Egyptians one of the most important organs in the body, and one of the organs which was not removed during mummification. (David, 2002). It was thought to be given back to the deceased in the afterlife. The heart was understood to be the seat of life, will, intellect, and conscience: 'A man's heart is his own god... [my heart] was my guide in the business of living...It is a judgement of the god that dwells in the bodies of all being.' (Chevalier, 1996: 480).

But the heart also contained and expressed the individual's love. Below are excerpts of an Ancient Egyptian love poem showing the importance of the heart in feeling of human love:

'Is my heart not softened by your love-longing for me?

My dogfoot-(fruit) which excites your passions

Not will I allow it

To depart from me

...

My heart yearns for your breast,

I cannot surrender myself from your attractions.

Thou beautiful one! My heart's desire is

To procure for you your food as your husband,

My arm resting upon your arm.

You have changed me by your love.

Thus say I in my heart,

In my Soul, at my prayers:

"I lack my commander tonight,

I am as one dwelling in a tomb."

...

⁶⁹ The Egyptian custom is referred in Apion's now lost work, *Aegyptiaca* and is referenced by Aulus Gellius (c AD 125) in his work *The Attic Nights*. Wikipedia, entry for Vena Amoris [online] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vena_amoris. [Accessed February 2006].

I have found my brother in his bed,
My heart is glad beyond all measure.
We each say:
“I will not tear myself away.”

My hand is in his hand.
I wonder together with him to every beautiful place
He makes me the first of maidens,
Nor does he grieve my heart
...
Your hand in my hand,
My Soul inspired
My heart in bliss,
Because we go together’
(Barton, 1920: 413-416).

As seen in this example, taking the hand is also connected with feelings of love. Today associations between love and the hand can be found in expressions of affection in which someone takes someone else’s hand to convey an issue of a deep emotional nature. Lovers walk the streets hand in hand. And of course there is the expression ‘to ask for someone’s hand in marriage’.

Laszlo Magyar, in a paper presented at the 1990 International Congress on the History of Medicine references Aulus Gellius’ *The Attic Nights*: ‘According to our knowledge ancient Greeks wore their ring on the finger of their left hand proximal to the little finger. The Romans were assumed to wear their rings also there. Apion attributed it, in his book on Egypt, to the cause that Egyptians, when, according to their customs, cut and dissected the human body...detected a slim nerve, which, originating in the finger mentioned above proceeds and penetrates quite up to the human heart. Therefore, it does not seem to be unjustified to adorn this finger in such a way, which, in view of the above, is related to heart, the prince of the body.’ (Magyar, 1990).

Magyar continues: ‘The records are supported by the fact that an important role was attributed by Egyptian – and Greek – thinking to the nerves or vessels proceeding from

the heart solely because of the importance of the heart itself: the heart is often regarded as the centre of vitality and procreative power, and there is also a clue... that vital force originating in the heart can also be concentrated in the finger. In other places there are references of the association between the ring finger of the left hand, the procreative power and the principle of maternity...An Egyptian conception actually existed or could at least have existed according to which a vessel ascends from the heart to the ring finger.⁷⁰

Hence there is a vein that carries the love from the heart to the finger and the symbol of that love is placed on this finger. The wedding ring is to be found here because it reflects the love that unites the two people.

The *vena amoris* thus carries the blood inflamed by love into the finger, where the symbol for the attachment is positioned.

Physiologically there is no such 'vein of love' connecting the heart with the ring finger. There is however an association between the heart and the left arm in the event of a heart attack. When it strikes a pain is felt down the interior of the arm and forearm, which establishes a physiological connection between the two places in the body.⁷¹

If the connection between the heart and feelings of love is a clear association, the question of why the hand and the third finger's association with love is perhaps more obscure. In the search for possible reasons for this connection maybe the Hebraic tradition may be called upon to shed some light on the subject.

Annick de Souzaenelle (1995) establishes interesting connections regarding the hand and the ring finger from the point of view of the Hebraic tradition. In accordance with kabbalistic exegesis, the author makes a symbolic analysis of the letters of the Hebrew

⁷⁰ In his paper Dr Magyar, based on cross cultural linguistic and ethnographic examples arrives at the conclusion that the ring finger has traditionally been understood as depository of some sort of magical power, hence its other Latin name (besides *digitus annularis* from *annular* 'ring'), *digitus medicinalis* or *medicus*. 'The adjective *medicinalis* originates from the verb *medeor* (medico), the original meaning of which is no less than "to heal by magic". The verb can be traced back to the stem *med* – this stem designates "middle" – that is how perhaps the original meaning of the word *medicus*, i.e., "mediator" (*medium*), a mediator between humans and the world of the Spirits (i.e., magician) can be interpreted.... [T]he ring finger received this particular name not from the physicians but from the most ancient way of healing, i.e., magic.' (Magyar, 1990).

⁷¹ This is called 'referred pain' and is defined as pain perceived in an area of the body with no apparent connection with the area affected. (U. S. NIH, National Heart, Blood, and Lung Institute (NHLBI)).

alphabet from both numerological and formal perspectives and also through analysis of the words themselves.

Hence, why the hand, and in particular this finger's association with marriage?

The hand touches, rendering tangible to the senses the physical world. At the same time the hand *confirms* the existence of the physical existence – the hand recognises tangibility, physical phenomena.⁷²

The hand also acts. The hand acts what the heart feels. From this perspective the hand can thus be understood as a *prolonging* or extension of the heart. Thus to take someone's hand in marriage is to prolong the emotion of desiring the person's affection and thus taking him or her as spouse.

Souzenelle, quoting Pierre Vulliand's work La Kabbale Juive (Souzenelle, 1995: 224) refers to the Jewish custom of a bride being offered a golden hand and a house where a wedding is taking place having hands painted in the walls. The reason for this tradition – or a justification for it – can, according to Souzenelle, be found in the fact that 'in Hebraic "hand" – *yad* יָד – is simply the letter *yod* י ... [and] is connected to "knowledge" *yada* יָדָה, "I know", and it also means "I love"'.⁷³ This for the Hebrews is not an intellectual quality but the experimental knowledge that the man acquires of the woman, that every man acquires of every element of creation...that knowledge is marriage, that knowledge is love.' (Souzenelle, 1995: 221). The hand is thus associated with love and knowledge. In fact, in the Bible, the expression used to depict a sexual encounter is 'to know a woman', that is, *to make love* to her.⁷⁴

The hand is therefore, from a symbolic point of view, associated with the knowledge that the *experience* of love offers. Thus to 'take the hand, *yad*, in marriage' as quoted above.

⁷² Christ said, after having resurrection, when the disciples doubted his existence as a physical body '*Palpate ed videte*': 'touch me and see' (Lk 24: 36).

⁷³ For in depth discussion of the symbolism of the letter see Souzenelle (1993: 113- 119).

⁷⁴ Gen 4: 1 'And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain'. Also, Lk 1: 34 'Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be seeing I know not a man?' Likewise, the Greek word *erotici* derives from *Eros* (love) and means 'to know'. (Liddell, 1989). See Chapter 5 Saudade for the Future for development. It seems relevant to refer that from the perspective of the symbolic interpretation of the Hebraic alphabet, 'the woman is the symbol of the feminine existing within each person [man or woman].' (Souzenelle, 1993: 117). Thus, to spouse a woman, to know her, to love her, is synonym of espousing, knowing, loving one's intrinsic nature. See also by the same author Le Feminin de L'Etre, Pour En Finir Avec la Cote D'Adam (1997).

A hand touches – ‘the concrete touch [sexual in this context] opens the door to the touch of the spiritual, the door of Knowledge.’ (Souzenelle, 1995: 221).

Continuing with the same approach, each finger is understood to have a force, and each is associated with a planet and an organ in the human body. The suggested reason for the use of the wedding ring – the symbol that denounces the bond of love and knowledge – on the third finger of the hand is because this finger is esoterically connected with the sun, with light, and with – the liver.

‘The hand is connected with the five organs of the human body: the ring finger is connected with the sun [light] and [hence] with the liver.’ (Souzenelle, 1995: 224).

‘Liver in Hebraic is *caved* כבד and means also “weight, gravity, wealth and power”. It expresses the thirst for the divine *Power*, for its Glory. It has the numerical value of $20 + 2 + 4 = 26$, the sacred name of יהוה [YHVH, that is, the sacred Tetragram, the unpronounceable name of God]⁷⁵ and thus it is the *resurrection*. It has equal value and therefore equal potency to the name YHVH: the liver is called to enrich itself with the NAME, it is called to acquire the totality of Its energies.’ (Souzenelle, 1995: 182).⁷⁶

In kabbalistic exegesis the liver appears connected with the ‘desire that [every person man or woman] has of the divine bridegroom...It is the place of the elevation of energies.’ (Souzenelle, 1995: 184-185). It is an organ with the ‘vocation of light’, it is ‘that place where the light of what has been accomplished [the transmutation of denser energies into higher ones] is stored...It becomes the Resurrection. (Souzenelle, 1995: 182).

Therefore, the use of the ring on this finger is connected with the spiritual desire for the consummation of the divine marriage, of the hierogamy in the image of the marriage between the lovers, symbol of the divine marriage.

⁷⁵ This is the use of guemetry. The Hebrew guemetry is a method of Torah exegesis that, on one hand establishes a correspondence between the letters, words and sentences of the Torah, and on the other hand with numbers associated to the same letters; as such, guemetry permits the opening of new horizons in the understanding of the text.

⁷⁶ My italics.

‘The purified energies are stored in the liver.’ (Souzenelle, 1995: 181). These are already ‘hierogamised’ energies. The attracting energy is love, and this love is contained or expressed through the heart.

In the Sephirotic Tree⁷⁷ the place of the heart in the inscribed human figure is occupied by the sephiroth Tiphereth, which is ‘Beauty, Harmony, Glory’. (Souzenelle, 1995: 175). In the Christian kabbalah this sephiroth is associated with the heart of Christ, thus with the *resurrected* being. Souzenelle says the following about Tiphereth,

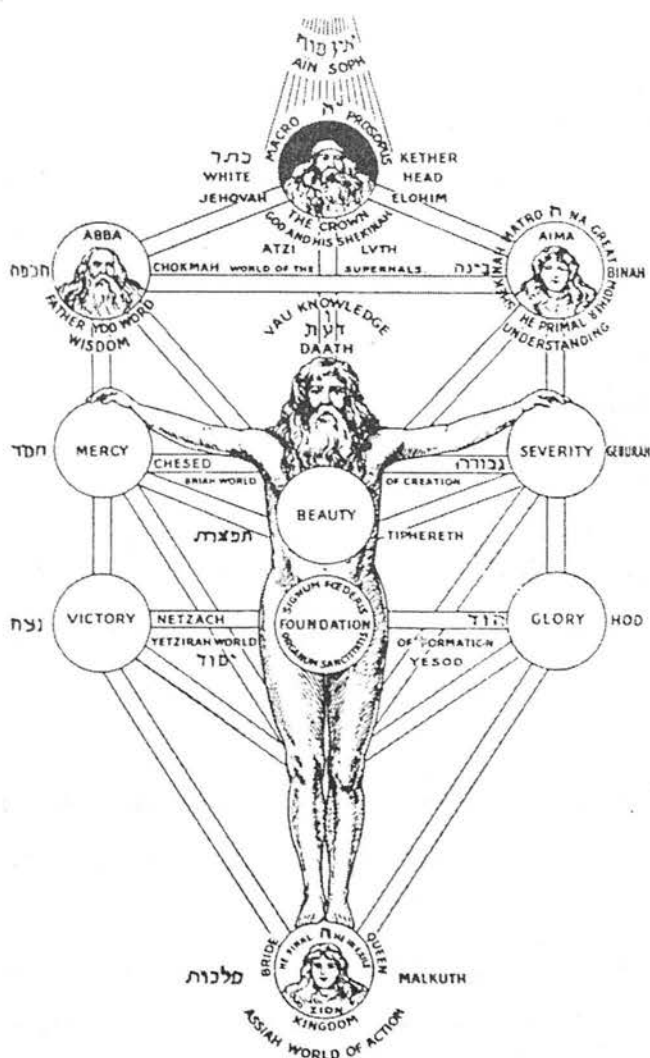


Figure 34. The sephiroth tree (anthropomorphised).

⁷⁷ The sephiroth in the Jewish Kabbalah are representations which stand for the ten attributes that God created through which He can project Himself to the universe and to humanity. They are emanations from God, manifested in the physical and metaphysical planes of existence. The ten sephiroth can be represented in a tree formation, which is described as having twenty-two paths. These paths are associated with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and each of these correspond to a particular quality in manifestation. Each sephiroth has a name which ‘describes’ each of god’s attributes. The sephiroth Tiphereth is the sixth one standing on the tree below Keter and above Yesod and four sephirots surrounding it, Chsed (or Hesed), Gevurah (or Din), Netzach and Hod. (Souzenelle, 1995).

‘In the divine scheme it is the plenitude of divine Harmony. It unites all colours, all sounds, all perfumes, all rhythms, and exalts them in the perfect *unity of their encounter*. It is moderation, it is Beauty. It is the divine Sun, the supreme wheel which in spinning *unites dark and light*. From the whirl thus created explode all the possibilities of divine Love... To marry the divine in Tiphereth is to marry one’s own contradictions, the high and the low, the right and the left, the before and the after.’ (Souzenelle, 1995: 174-176).⁷⁸

So we have in this finger the expression of the *hierosgamos* with the divine, with the realisation of the divine within the human being. Marriage as a sexual encounter can thus be understood as symbol of this divine marriage. Hence the rings and the gold in the rings: a symbol of the eternal bond, eternal because it is divine.

One wedding ring always indexes the existence of its counterpart. It is its condition to be in a relation of unity with its pair. In the case of the rings, the unity is the bond between the lovers coming together in their union in Tiphereth, in love, in the heart.

The skin printed on the faces of the cube is that of the skin covering the chest - the place of the heart. Directly underneath that skin the heart beats. The chest contains the heart, placed at the centre of the human body. (Figure 34 and 35)

In the artwork there is thus the representation of both poles of the *vena amoris* – its origin and its ‘end’, the heart, organ of love and the third finger, the finger of light.

‘Only will be born to Beauty whomever who, *dust* 7 3 5, has gone through the proof of fire and has become *ashes* 7 3 8. He would have transformed the Ayin 5 in Aleph 8, the 7 into the 1. Dead and resurrected, he will enter the eternal splendour.’ (Souzenelle, 1995: 179).

⁷⁸ My italics.

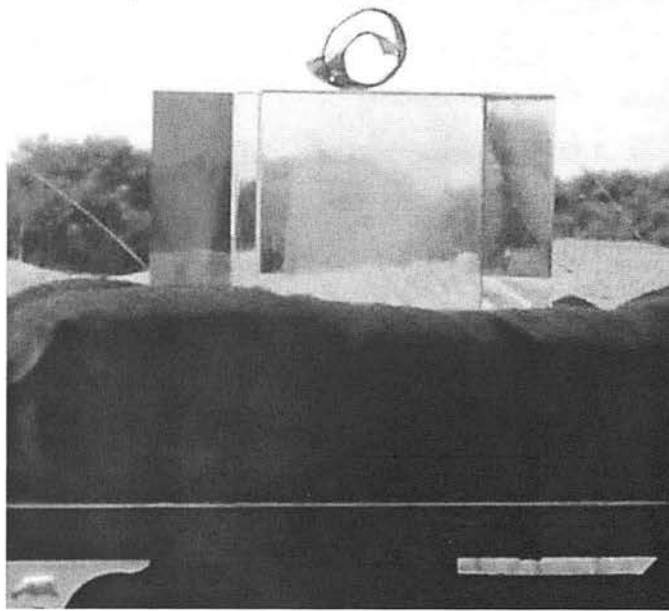


Figure 35. *Seal Upon Your Heart*, skin prints on the glass cube.

4.2 Cube – anagoria from the centre of the cross

This text considers the square and the cube in the artwork. These exist here in two instances: respectively, as the form of the supporting pillows in the three pieces and as the constituent element of the piece *Seal Upon Your Heart*.

The square and cubic forms will be discussed from two perspectives. On the one hand, as symbolic expression of the perfected material world, thus extending their meaning to the objects placed upon them. On the other hand, from the perspective of their geometric and symbolic associations with the form of the cross which establishes relations with love and resurrection.

4.2.1 Square and cube – symbolic expression of the perfected material world

The square, the cube and number four share essentially the same symbolic associations. 'The symbolism of number four and the square come together... Being a three-dimensional square, the cube bears the same relation to volume as the square does to plane surfaces.' (Chevalier, 1996: 912, 268). The cube represents that which is solidly and immutably implanted in the material world. This is the reason why the Egyptian pharaohs were represented seated on a cubic stone - symbol of the stability of their reigning.

The cube symbolises permanence. 'The cube is symbol of solidification [and] stability...it possesses [a] notion of fulfilment.' (Chevalier, 1996: 914). It is the image of harmony in the material world. 'The cube has been regarded as symbol of perfection from the dawn of our civilization. It is an image of eternity for its solid...qualities.' (Chevalier, 1995: 268). It stands for the perfected, manifested thing – to be stable in perfection or the perfection of stability.

The city of Revelation is divine, thus 'perfect': 'And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven' (Rev 21: 2). But is also cubic: 'And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breath: and he measured the city with the reed... The length and the breath and the height are equal'. (Rev 21: 11).

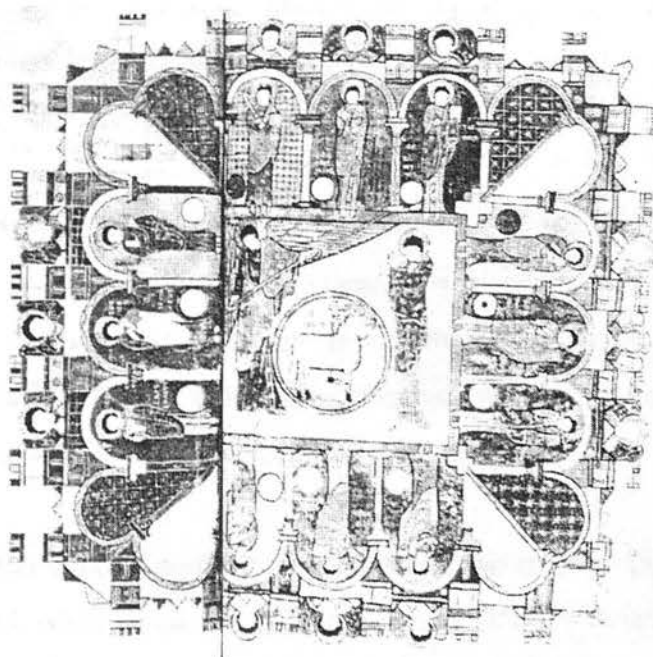


Figure 36. *The Heavenly Jerusalem from the Apocalypse of Saint-Sever, 11th century, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.*

The square shape of the heavenly city is relevant because for two aspects. On the one hand, it is the *crystallization* of the essentially indestructible aspects of the phenomenological world. Jerusalem is a cube and is also a crystal: 'And her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.' (Rev 21:11). The heavenly city is really a crystal, not only because of its transparent, incorruptible and luminous substance, but also because of its crystalline form.

In the artwork the rings placed on the cube and also the skin prints on it are thus *made stable* by the perfection of the glass crystal cube. (Figure 35) That is, the cube confers the meaning of stability and harmony to the registration of the amorous encounter placed upon it. Because the cube represents the perfection of the material world of *flesh*, the lovers have thus reached the harmonious relation through their *bodies*. The light that is allowed to pass through the glassy surface of the cube is the same light that passes through the opening of the rings and the interstices of the skin prints.

On the other hand Jerusalem is also the vision of a perfect material *time to come*. Earthly paradise is generally depicted as round, signifying 'Heaven on Earth', whereas the city of Revelation's square shape announces 'Earth on Heaven'. That is, the *perfected* phenomenological, temporal world, which is 'an unprecedented leap into the *future*. [It] symbolises the new order of creation which will replace the existing world at the *end of time*'. (Chevalier, 1996: 553-554).⁷⁹

Hence, as spiritual event to happen ('the Messiah's kingdom' (Chevalier, 1996: 553)) at an *undefined* later time, the celestial Jerusalem relates with the teleological sense present in the three pieces of the artwork. It connects with the hierosgamos as aim, as teleology of the ontological journey. Analogically, the consummation of the erotic encounter (of the lovers, of the being with itself) corresponds to the arrival at the heavenly city.

Because the celestial cube is perfection in manifestation it is not the Spirit alone but the flesh made spiritual, which is the aim of the alchemist as we have seen in the image of the Resurrected Christ: a 'Resurrection body' (Corbin, 1989: 201). (Figures 15 and 16) This

⁷⁹ My italics.

is what the theologians call the '*hypostatic union*', that is, the fusion in Christ of the two natures, human and divine, and which the alchemists defined as "'Spiritualising the body' and 'materializing the Spirit'". (Freitas, 2003: 138). A material body still but which has become spiritualised. The Spiritualization of matter is a distinctive trait of the *perfected* material world. So what the artwork attempts to represent is the perfected physical encounter, which is a spiritual quality. By bringing in the association of the celestial Jerusalem into the work what is being emphasised is the concept of the intention of the blending of the natures from the Spirit and the flesh. These two are joined while they are both in *manifestation*. That which is manifested has necessarily a bodily aspect – only pure Spirit has not.

Each piece of artwork has as foundation a square pillow, which performs the task of plinths.

Therefore, the pillows that support each piece of artwork, as well as the cube (as a superimposed plinth) are places of *stability*. A plinth, besides offering stable support to the piece it sustains, is also that which *elevates* or separates the object it presents to the world, *from* it. Lying on top of the silk pillows on the floor are objects, which speak of their desire for an amorous fulfilment – with a star and with the nature within. What is on the crystal cube and on top of it is an amorous encounter, represented by the coming together of the *vena amoris* of two lovers. These rings, these prints, these encounters, are therefore, by their association with the plinths, elevated and separated from the world. That is, from the world of physical representation, and impelled into the world of the unutterable loving encounter.

4.2.2 *Square and cube – geometric and symbolic associations with the form of the cross*

If the square is as we've seen representative of the perfection of the manifested world, 'manifestation [itself] evolves from a fixed centre to the four points of the compass along the arms of an imaginary cross' (Chevalier, 1996: 913) inscribed in the quadrangle.

The cross is relevant in this research in the following aspects: the meeting point of the two branches of the cross as symbolic place of the loving synthesis of the female and male aspects; from that point the anagogical movement towards the Spirit; the point at the centre of the cross as the fulcrum of the rotational movement from square into octagon; Sirius as the origin of the cross symbolism and thus the relation of the cross with love.

The two arms of a two-dimensional cross meet in a fixed central point. This is supposed to identify the place of the synthesis of the two branches, symbolic of the female and male poles of manifestation. 'As a symbol,' writes René Guénon, 'the cross is a marriage of opposites.' (Guénon, *Le symbolisme de la croix*, in Chevalier, 1996: 257).

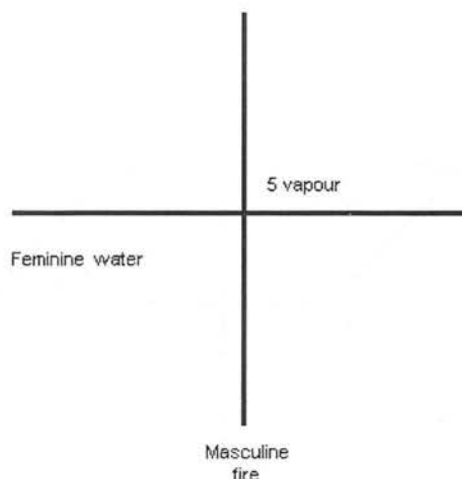


Figure 37. Vapour stemming from the centre of the cross: the merging of the masculine and feminine elements.

The horizontal arm of the cross is associated with water (a feminine element⁸⁰) which has a natural tendency to slide and spread on the horizontal plane; whereas the vertical line finds associations with fire (a masculine element⁸¹) which elevates itself in vertical ascent. Aivanhov states: 'The cross is a pentacle of the greatest profundity; it represents man himself, synthesis of the two principles, masculine and feminine.' (Aivanhov, 1993:

⁸⁰ 'The Hebrew letter *mem* symbolizes tangible water and this is the mother and the womb.' (Chevalier, 1996: 1082). Likewise, Souzenelle: *Mem* 'is essentially a symbol of matrix. It is constituent letter of the word *mayim*, the primordial waters [before the division of the waters on the second day of creation, into the superior waters *mi* and inferior waters *ma*]' (Souzenelle, 1993: 143).

⁸¹ 'The *yod* at the heart of "fire" is the "groom"'. (Souzenelle, 1993: 249).

114). The meeting of the two arms of the cross is their coincidence and thus signifies the duality of the principles overcome.

Considering the cross inscribed in the square, the centre of the square coincides with the synthetic point at the centre of the cross. The former is represented by the number 4, and the central dot, as union of opposites, by the number 5. In Lima de Freitas' words, 'the number 5 is a centred 4, the four vertex of the square with the dot in the middle...In the West the [spiritual] quintessence is represented by the dot in the centre of the square...the number 5 incarnates the Spirit of man and his attainment of [Spiritual] consciousness.' (Freitas, 2003: 112, 115).

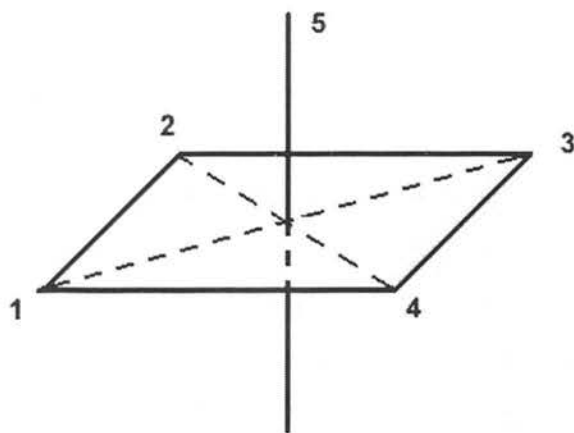


Figure 38. Vertical elevation of the 5: anagoria from the centre of the cross.

The author refers to the consecration of the Christian altar ('a microcosm in relation to the liturgical realization and consecration of the universe') during which '[its] centre is blessed as the place of ascension and elevation of consciousness to the divine level. Here, the number 5 is the centre of the earth, the 4, represented by the cubic shape of the altar [more precisely a parallelepiped].' (Freitas, 2003: 115).

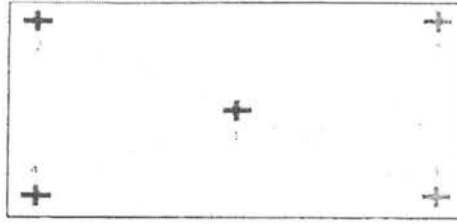


Figure 39. Consecration of the Christian altar. The priest signals five crosses: first, the cross at the centre, which is where the sky touches the earth – this is where the divine presence is communicated to humanity. The other four radiate from the centre, diagonally, towards the edges of the altar. The rectangular table represents the totality of space.

This point of synthesis, the dot, represented by the 5, is therefore the place from where the *anagogical* movement of the square stems. ‘*Anagogia*’ is in Christian theology understood as denoting ‘mystical meaning par excellence, [yet it] is much more than a mystical meaning: it is the very act of elevating oneself to the light and face of God...it starts out low – with every physical particle of the sacred text – and aims heavenward, towards invisible and divine light; it aims at the future in the eschatological sense; it aims towards what William of Saint-Thierry called *osculum aeternitatis*, the kiss of eternity.’ (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 147).⁸²

This is related with the reaching out to the quintessence and is present in the relation between the 4 and the 5. The quintessence achieved refers to the perfection quality in the stability that the square represents. The human being’s own quintessence is his or her individual hierogamy achieved, in the apprehension of his or her human and divine natures.

⁸² ‘*Anagogia* constitutes the supreme ideal of all religious [art]: that of eliciting a movement of conversion from the *visible* dimension towards something we could call the *visual* place of mystery.’ (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 40-41).

‘4 is the *pedestal* [the plinth] or base of all the forms of consciousness; when it completes the cycle of ascension and metamorphosis towards the Spirit, [it becomes] the numerical and angular symbol of the pentagonal resurrection.’ (Freitas, 2003: 185187).⁸³

The rings occupy the place of the ascensional movement of the square becoming cube, the *elevation* of the square through the vertical axis stemming from the centre of the lower quadrangle. Being the cube a 4, the 5 can therefore be represented by the rings, which already contain a signification of hierogamy by being image of the lover’s erotic encounter. (Figure 35 and 42)



Figure 40. *The marriage of king and queen, sun and moon, under the influence of the Spirit, Rosarium Philosophorum, Vadiana Library, St. Gallen. Note the anagoria from the centre of the masculine and feminine cross. The ascending movement is represented by the vertical direction symbolised by the dove, an airborne creature.*

If the square and the cube are ‘static’ forms, the cross is associated with the ‘dynamic aspect of the quaternary.’ (Guénon, 1962: 126). At the centre of the inscribed cross – the

⁸³ The pentagon is the form which in its form represents the quintessence, the perfection achieved and is symbolically associated with love. Albeit a very interesting topic, it falls out of the scope of this research. For details see Freitas (2003: 118-128).

point of intersection of the 'female' and 'male' branches – the rotating movement, that gives origin to the circle, has its fulcrum.

'The cross is the symbol that represents the presence and the work of the two principles, masculine and feminine in the universe. This work is made from the centre: the point of intersection of the two arms of the cross. This centre keeps the forces together...and when the two [mingle] their union produces movement' (Aivanhov, 1993: 114, 118), as does the water heated by the fire as vapour.⁸⁴

From this centre, which we've seen is the location of the *anagogia* energised by love (because it is the place of synthesis of the male and the female energies), the *ascensional* movement of resurrection occurs. It is precisely at this point that the hinge of the *circular movement* that transforms the square into the octagon exists. This is the fundamental geometric point for the resurrection symbolised by the octagon as seen previously.⁸⁵ Again, the rings find their placing on the *vertical* axis emerging from this central dot.

Esoteric thought as presented by Alice Bailey has it that the symbolism of the cross has its origin in the star Sirius. Discussing the imagery of a 'new age symbol' (Figure 41), the husband of Alice Bailey, Foster Bailey, writes: 'Behind the entire symbol, extending beyond the disk of golden light, emerges the cosmic cross, which is found in the consciousness of the great ones on that distant sun, Sirius. This cosmic cross is the origin of all the cross symbology as perceived and used by humanity down through the ages.'⁸⁶



Figure 41. A New Age symbol.

⁸⁴ These two elements, water and fire, are connected in the public consciousness with the thought of *purification*. Esoterically speaking the bodies of the Personality require purification in order for the energies emanating from the Monad to flow freely into the 'lower' bodies.

⁸⁵ See Chapter 3 *Aveo Amor* 'Octagon'.

⁸⁶ Bailey, F. *A new age symbol*, in Lucis Trust [online]. Available at: www.lucistrust.org/arcane/nasymb.html [Accessed December 2003].

As discussed before, the star Sirius is also understood from this esoteric perspective, to be the origin of the energy of love, the attracting, bonding and binding force, expressed in the solar system.

Thus, and associated with the previous subheading (the relation of the square with the anagogical movement towards the quintessence) the cross is symbolically related with the expression of love as magnetic and active force. Hence the 'male' and 'female' branches of the cross resolving their polarity at the centre, their point of encounter. There they meet and find their 'resolution'. 'The centre of the cross [is where] we find ourselves in a state of dynamic tension as energy streams down the vertical arm of the cross and outwards along the horizontal arm of service...At the centre of the cross, the human being is initiated into the higher energy states of harmony, peace and serenity, conditions having a passive, even static appearance that belies their terrific vibratory rate.' (Newey, 2003: 8).

The rings are 'male' and 'female', thus they are images of the lovers. Love, being an anagogical force, brings them together – in an 'horizontal' movement of approach – and then makes them *ascend* in the *hieroga(s)mic* moment. The image of the love between the lovers – the fitted rings – occupies the place where the ascensional axis of love exists. However, this is the representation of something phenomenologically unrepresentable – the hierogamy achieved. It is a *depth* of feeling, a *verticality* that is felt. Orgasm, as a sort of *alignment* between the lovers, transmutes the distinct two into the unified one. The *release* from the bond of the three-dimension is signalled by the void seen through the rings (Figure 42), and also at the tip of the horn (Figure 43), through which light is able to pass uninterruptedly. This represents the *release* from the phenomenal or sensual world of perception and hence of representation. In the esoteric Personality-Soul-Spirit alignment and likewise in orgasm there is no space-time (a distinctive attribute of phenomena) as *locus* and duration. In those moments, time stops, space dissolves – they can be understood as experiences of eternity in the instant. Put another way, eternity is experienced in the *depth* and the *height* – and not in the duration of the moment. Duration slides horizontally. This is how the anagogical – *vertical* – movement relates with the lover's encounter, which is in effect a *synthesis*, as orgasmic touch, which likewise falls beyond representation.

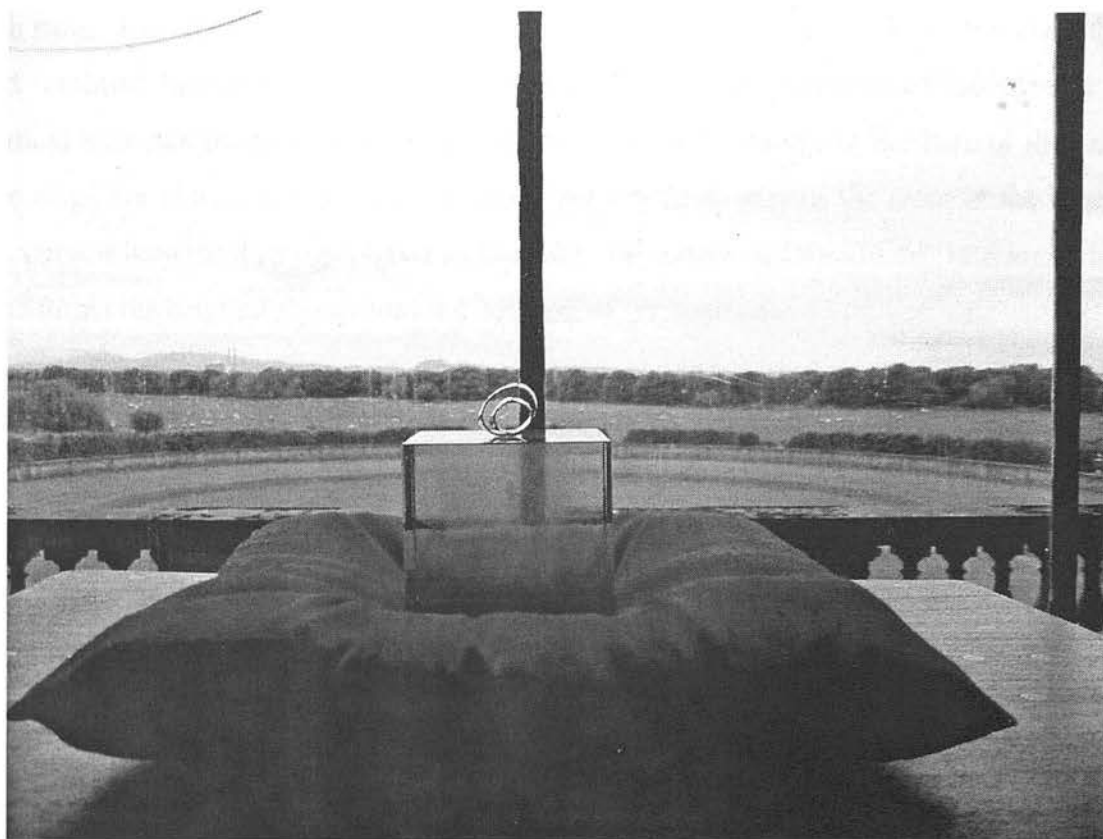


Figure 42. Seal Upon Your Heart. Unrepresentability of the loving encounter.



Figure 43. Aveo Amor. Release from the bond of materiality.

In brief, the aspects discussed above influence the significance of the rings placed upon the cube and standing on the square pillow (the same applies to the other two pieces, Aveo Amor and Saudade for the Future, which likewise rest on quadrangular pillows).

The rings stand for the male and female aspects of being and they stand for the masculine and feminine human lovers. The fundamental place in the geometry of the cube is the vertical axis stemming from the centre of the cross of the square at the base of the cube. The rings are placed in line with the ascending (vertical) axis of the cross at the base of the cube. Likewise they are placed in line with the centre of (horizontal) rotation, which transforms the original square into the octagon of resurrection.

Therefore the rings are in the projected place of the quintessence accomplished – and being covered in gold reiterates the spiritual quality *achieved*.⁸⁷

The same associations can be applied to the cases of the horn and the dress, which placed upon their square pillows, share with the rings their attributes and symbolic qualities.

4.3 Touch – Casting

Emphasis will now be placed around the concept of touch.

Touch is important for two reasons in this research: on the one hand the representation of the touch between the lovers is a theme in the artwork; on the other hand touch is a distinctive attribute of the casting process, the major technical process in the production of the artwork.

Touch is present in the artwork in four instances: in Aveo Amor as aim of the alignment between the horn and the star, in Seal Upon Your Heart in the taking of the cast of the two rings and their presentation, and in the printed skin on the cube.

Touch will here be considered from the point of view of:

- a) the aim of the lovers' journey to each other
- b) the creation of form in the casting process

Of particular relevance in this last instance it is the fact that touch, by being a distinctive attribute of phenomena (the physical world), creates a shadow in relation to the thing it

⁸⁷ See further down this chapter under 'Materials - Gold, Silk and Glass'.

touches. Therefore, shadow and the invisibility with which it is associated are here considered from the perspective of the unrepresentability of touch *itself* and also from the point of view of place of genesis of form.

The casting process will be analysed from the viewpoint of its parallel with the sexual encounter - the meeting of the lovers as a symbol of the alignment of the being with itself. Notions around the perspective of the reversal that occurs between the mould and the cast will also be considered.

Casting is the main technique employed in the making of the artwork. The horn was first carved and then cast and the rings were cast from the human body and then cast in silver, and later gold plated. The rings were cast when the fingers of the man and the woman were pressing against each other. The material used was rubber, which allowed for the exact reproduction of the detail of flesh and skin. The final cast in gold plated silver contains the registration of the original physical encounter.

The horn was initially carved directly in plaster and subsequently a plaster mould was constructed. The final cast – the horn itself – is made of ‘jesmonite’, a gypsum-based material reinforced with glass mesh. This material was chosen for its ability to keep its structural integrity for the long and thin form of the horn.⁸⁸

Casting is a haptic procedure, a method which has touch as its distinctive trait. Touch is central in the *modus operandi* of casting. The materials involved in the process come together and it is by physical contact, i.e., by touching each other that the final form results.

Touch is the aim of the journey of the lovers to each other. It is the *telos* (ultimate objective) of their mutual desire. Desire indicates a separation and therefore carries with it the wish for togetherness.⁸⁹ First the lovers are separated, then they move towards each other until they finally touch in a loving embrace. This is the case with the lovers, who consummate their desire when meeting in sexual encounter, the female surrounding the male with her body.

⁸⁸ See Appendix E ‘Construction of the horn, rings, and dress’ buttons’ for images and description of the process.

⁸⁹ See Chapter 5 Saudade for the Future ‘The ontological journey’.

From an esoteric philosophy perspective, this is also true from the point of view of the encounter of the being with itself when the Personality and the Spirit align and an uninterrupted flow of energy between the two is established. During this process, which is of alchemical transmutation, several alignments and corresponding initiations occur, during which the interior of the being is progressively contacted and revealed. This transmutational pattern is represented in the artwork by the horn's periodical alignments with the star and in the aspect of the dress being turned inside-out.

In both cases the objective of the journey is the blending of the energies of both polarities, so that their respective natures become entwined and thus merge. This process is the result of the energy of love, responsible for the desire of the duality for unity, for togetherness.⁹⁰ This is a creative encounter, a togetherness that produces a surge of energy that generates *life* – a child or the unicorn.

Likewise in the casting process there is a journey that the materials undergo. The casting process is a development in which *approach* and *formation* are sequentially re-enacted in a series of successive coming together and pulling apart – moulding, unmoulding, closing, opening – until eventually the final cast emerges. If an analogy with the lovers and the Personality-Soul cases can be established, the final cast, in its *form* aspect as the outcome of the casting process, can be equated with the life generated by the lovers.

The rings were first cast by the approaching of the lovers' fingers – this was a journey towards each other, a journey initiated through their mutual desire. Seal Upon Your Heart is the image of the lovers' desire *consummated*, expressed in the *initial touch* (the taking of the rubber cast) and in the presentation of the *touching* rings.

In Aveo Amor the earth and the star can likewise be said to journey to one another. The earth moves in space, carrying with it the horn, which approaches the star and then aligns with it. This is a journey that the two bodies undertake, until their encounter. In this case the encounter is one in which touch is an *aim*. However alignment is not a *physical touch*. Touch in this instance happens when the two are in alignment. Alignment, from the perspective of touch remains an aim. Therefore, although the horn and the star align,

⁹⁰ This aspect has been discussed in Chapter 3 Aveo Amor 'The unicorn' and is further developed in Chapter 5 Saudade for the Future 'The ontological journey'.

as far as the haptic aspect is concerned, they continuously desire each other, journeying through space and through time, until the day when, approaching each other at the speed of 8 km/hour they finally collide...

In the artwork three types of touch are therefore represented. In the piece Aveo Amor it is an abstract touch - a channel of energies is (poetically) established, it is an 'energetic' touch, a touch at a distance, it is touch tending to infinity. In the piece Seal Upon Your Heart the rings' touch *tends to zero*, to coincidence (distance negligible); in the skin prints it is touch *at zero*, it is coincidence (no distance between the touch and the touched). In whichever case however, the touch is always *invisible*.

The haptic is a feature of the physical world. When touch occurs the thing touched becomes invisible. It is not possible to simultaneously see what is being touched. The haptic creates a shadow, a darkness, an area of invisibility, thus a place of unrepresentability.

From this perspective, shadow, or that which is not visible, is relevant in this enquiry fundamentally because *touch is invisible*. That is, it is physically not representable, only its physical impressions are capable of representation in sculpture – or in the case of my sculpture, which is essentially object-based. This unrepresentability is present in the artwork in the flesh changes of the fingers and in the skin prints on the cube: all of these are not touch itself, they are physical results of touch. In the piece Seal Upon Your Heart the place where the two rings touch is *invisible* - it is not possible to see, to know, that precise place of touch, which is in complete shadow. Likewise, the touch between the horn and the star is *invisible* – it is also a kind of a shadow, tending towards the unknowable, the unseeable, hence to the unrepresentable. The alignment is the index of the touch as aim. Until the day of their collision, from a physical point of view, their physical touch remains an aspiration.

Touch itself is the sensation it creates. Thus when touch is represented, for instance in sculpture, one is condemned to always miss it. It is the essential that is missing: the essence of touch, i.e., the pleasure. When represented, it is not possible to access how that touch feels but only what it does, what it looks like. Only the symptom is accessible.

Love has a relation with the dark, both in its feeling aspect and in its generative quality. The connection I am ultimately trying to establish is that the mould/cast can be a symbol for the relationship of love between the lovers.

The relation of love with the dark is twofold: in caressing it creates an obscurity where the touch is felt. And because it feels, it desires to go *within* – or it is already within (depending on the stage of the sexual encounter). In contacting, in entering the darkness of the female body it creates life *because it feels*. It is from the continuation of the crescendo waves of *touching* sensations of pleasure that orgasm emerges and life hence has its origin.

However, it is exactly this feeling aspect that a cast cannot represent. The feeling aspect is only contained, ‘meta-physically’, *within* the cast and the proof of that is that the cast *happened*. But the touch itself – its feeling dimension, the *love* - cannot be represented. Only its physical *symptoms* can be. Love is fleeting, it cannot be arrested in form. Only love’s physical effects can be. What it does is to leave behind the mark of its presence: in the cast rings, in the skin prints. This unrepresentability is demonstrated by the absence of physical evidence of love’s passage in the case of Aveo Amor. Yet we know of love’s presence because the earth keeps moving and periodically brings into alignment the star and the horn. This movement is a consequence of the desire that these two ‘lovers’ attempt to fulfil.

Furthermore love, in the case of the artwork, is *acting in the dark* – we cannot *see* the touch between the horn and the star, as we cannot *see* the touch between the two rings. Love is making touch happen through a touching that is always in the dark, is always in the shadow or always creates a shadow, *making sure it can never be known*. The story of Eros and Psyche illustrates the unrepresentable nature of love. In the myth Eros meets Psyche as his lover under the condition that she can never know who he is. Psyche was warned by Eros that if she was ever to see him she would irrevocably lose him. After several night encounters, taken over by curiosity she lights an oil lamp and sees her lover’s face. An oil drop falls on his shoulder and, revealed, he flees away. (Chevalier, 1996: 619).

In brief, in the artwork this invisibility is either the result of a large distance between the two encountering bodies or the result from the proximity of touch, that is, the coincidence between the two encountering bodies. We can never see the physical touch – be it in proximity (*vide* coincidence) or in distance (*vide* teleology).

The kabbalistic interpretation, as has been indicated, equates ‘knowledge’ with ‘love’, and also with the hand.⁹¹

The hand is the main organ in the human body associated with touch and also with love, even though the touch between the lovers involves the use of their whole bodies – their whole bodies are organs of touch. Lovers get to know each other, they feel their love through their touch. This touch creates an obscurity as we have seen. When lovers touch the contact of their skin creates the invisibility, the shadow that allows them to feel the touch.

Consequently lovers know each others’ bodies ‘in the dark’. This darkness further enhances their sensations – don’t lovers close their eyes when they kiss? Also the male body penetrates the interior of the female’s body, which is in darkness, in the shadow.

I will now consider the shadow from the perspective of place of genesis of form.

Touch is, teleologically, a generative occurrence. The touching sensation between the lovers, which may start in a kiss, will develop into the conception of the child, when they meet sexually.

As in the interior of the female body, in the casting process the setting of the cast occurs in the shadow, in the darkness of the interior of the mould, aptly also called matrix, meaning ‘womb’ in Latin (Partridge, 1983: 386). The process is carried through in invisibility, in the darkness of the necessarily closed mould.⁹²

⁹¹ See ‘*Vena Amoris*’, earlier in this chapter.

⁹² ‘Woman’ in Hebraic is *Naqob*, which signifies ‘hole’ or the verb ‘to hole’. ‘Man’ is *Zakor*, meaning ‘to remember’. ‘Therefore it is fundamentally male whomever, man or woman, remembers this “other side” of him/herself, said “female”.’ The creative principle, male, enters the female, which is hollow: ‘Woman’ thus stands for “the opening, for the primal abyss. *Tob* qualifies the “light” of the day one of biblical Creation, *R’a* qualifies the “darkness” of that day. [Ge 1: 1-5] ... The psychological interpretation associates the ontological “woman” with *R’a*, the “primordial darkness”, that which is still psychologically or Spiritually unrealised in every person, male or female.’ (Souzenelle, 1997: 27-28). My italics.

As I have indicated above, touching *can never be known*. Below is an example, from the perspective of *religious mystery*⁹³ of the generative powers of the shadow – with the creative powers contained within the divine shadow and, by analogy, with the creative powers of the shadow-creating touch.

In the Old Testament, when God appears He is on a cloud which both reveals and hides Him. He is revealed in that the cloud appears but he always remains concealed. This God, in order to be ‘seen’, i.e., rendered ‘physical’, being ‘pure light’, surrounds Himself with His polarity, the shadow of the cloud.⁹⁴

‘In appearing [God] does not unveil himself as a face or semblance...In Leviticus [16:2], God himself warns Moses: “I will appear in the cloud” [*in nube apparebo*]. And everyone henceforth has had the experience: God “bowed down the heavens” and “made darkness his secret place”; “darkness was under his feet”. And he clouded all resemblance through the pure formlessness of clouds placed above other clouds.’ (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 196).

⁹³ “In the New Testament the word *mystery* is applied ordinarily to the...Incarnation and life of the Saviour... Theologians give the name *mystery* to revealed truths that surpass the powers of natural reason. Mystery, therefore, in strict theological sense is not synonymous with the incomprehensible, since all that we know is incomprehensible, i.e., not adequately comprehensible as to its inner being; nor with the unknowable, since many things merely natural are accidentally unknowable, on account of their inaccessibility, e.g., things that are future, remote, or hidden. In its strict sense a mystery is a supernatural truth, one that of its very nature lies above finite intelligence.” The Catholic Encyclopaedia [online]. Available at: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10662a.htm>. [Accessed March 2006].

⁹⁴ The reason why I am using the Annunciation is because being considered a ‘divine text’, then it contains the ability of making the point universal, with several layers of interpretative possibilities as the historical richness of its exegesis demonstrates. Precisely because it is understood as being ‘divine’ it denounces an ontological order of things as they manifest in the world.



Figure 44. Carlo da Camerino, 'Annunciation', late 14th century, tempera, Urbino, Palazzo Ducale.

It is precisely as shadow that God appears to Mary. "The power of the Highest will overshadow thee" (Lk 1: 35): ' "*Virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi*". It is a marriage rite, a nuptial sanctification: we find it in the immemorial Jewish figure of the *talesh* that covers the union of the spouses with its shadow. The image was taken up...by the Christian tradition dealing with the Annunciation, with Latin authors playing on the words *innuba* (the young virgin woman), *nubes* (the divine cloud), and *nubere* (to take the veil, that is, to marry.' (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 196). In the case of the Annunciation we have the hierogamy between the Virgin and the divine entity, a hierogamy that has occurred by means of a shadow, of which the marriage between the lovers is a symbol. Paradoxically, the shadow is the *visible* aspect of the hierogamy. This is relevant for the issue of the unrepresentability of touch itself. Shadow is a place of representational (sculptural) mystery. The shadow therefore carries with it the dimension that is love that goes beyond the possibility of three-dimensional – i.e. sculptural – depiction.

Didi-Huberman associates Mary with the tabernacle, the physical receptor of the divine input. The author quotes the Revelation: '[Saint John] sees the heavenly Jerusalem descend, dressed as a bride who is still a virgin, and hears a sublime voice cry: "Behold, the tabernacle...of God is with men"...And this is Mary's manifest glory, Mary the mother of God, his receptacle, his dwelling.' (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 186). In the Annunciation, God comes as a shadow over Mary. He casts his loving shadow, full of creative capacity, over her physical body. Naturally God and Mary are shadows of different qualities: one stands for the unrepresentability of God, the other signifies the shadow, the dark, within Mary's body. The divine conception occurs *by* the power contained within a shadow (the shadow of God) *into* the dark of Mary's womb - two shadows in creative relationship.⁹⁵

It is by the tergiversation of these two shadows that the new 'form', the child Jesus is created. What is of relevance in this text is the shadow as locus of generation, be it in the divine occurrence, in the case of the lovers or in the casting process.

The casting process has further parallels with sexual reproduction, which generates form and life and also 'gives form to the unformed'. (Didi-Huberman, 1997: 38). Casting at all times starts with a formlessness. The material which will harden as cast always starts with no clear structure or shape. Of course at the start of the casting there is always a form that is originally cast and from which the initial mould is taken. Yet that is independent of the casting process itself, which is understood to begin when the first mould is made. In the case of my work this first form is a natural 'object' – fingers in the case of Seal Upon Your Heart – or the carved form of the horn in Aveo Amor.

In the casting process the mould, the matrix, can be equated with the womb of the woman. Both are in the dark, in the shadow and, in both, life acquires form. 'The matrix is the place where the form takes its resemblance.' (Didi-Huberman, 1997: 38). Inside it the liquid congeals to produce the cast form and the child. Both can thus be an aspect of the activity of love. In both cases the 'parents' come together, with the male liquid

⁹⁵ For the light that is God and light placed inside Mary, that is, the simultaneous presence of light and shadow in the theophany see Chapter 5 Saudade for the Future 'Revelation of the interior'. Light is that which containing the life, gives it. In the case of the divine conception, it gives form to the flesh which is a shadow, so that it can be revealed to the human world. In this part of the text I am only referring to the *formation* of form and life in a relationship of shadows and of invisibilities.

entering the female form and there 'coagulating'. (Didi-Huberman, 1997: 38). Fitting together, they give form to the result of their encounter. 'In the cast the copy is the direct output, the 'fleshy' material result of the ['loving' embrace]. (Didi-Huberman, 1997: 38).

This is done by touch, by the *alignment* of the liquid inside the form of the mould. The viscous, formless material impregnates, infuses and saturates the mould, pushing itself against the walls of the mould, tucking itself inside the matrix. The impression of the cast is transmitted physically, in a sexual embrace, with 'pressure' and 'penetration'. (Didi-Huberman, 1997: 38). The congealing substance will be impressed with the tactile and optical qualities of the mould, while keeping its own attributes. For example, a cast in plaster will be different from a cast in glass, in spite of the fact that both can set on the same mould.

In the artwork this place of the touch between the mould and the viscous, this intensely intimate touch will be occupied by the gold. The gold leaf in the horn, the gold plating in the rings.

In the casting process a chronological *delay* occurs between the time of the pouring of the congealing substance, its coagulation, and eventually the opening of the mould with the cast emerging, hardened and fully formed, from within its matrix.

Similarly, the piece Seal Upon Your Heart – as image of the lovers' mutual desire – contains two sequential instances: a fingers' cast and a chest skin print. In the cast, the *actuality* of the loving touch is represented. Conversely, in the skin prints what is represented is the *intention* of the encounter, once they do not effectively touch. Because of the thickness and also the materiality of the glass, the lovers cannot feel one another. A *delay* occurs here. In the case of the skin prints the delay is kept constant, that is, the lovers do not consummate their desire for reciprocal touch.

However the delay expressed in the prints is not kept indefinitely. At the top of the cube the encounter really happens, which is present in the cast rings as forensic evidence of the reality of the touch. There was in reality an original touch that gave origin to the initial rubber mould. The lovers' mutual desire at first happens as approach (that is not

consummated) to become in a second instance accomplished in the rings placed on top of the 'perfect' form of the cube.

It is the simultaneous presence of the two moments that confers the sense of an accomplished activity – the desire, the movement towards one another (delayed in relation to the original erotic impulse) and finally the consummation of the desire.

In my work, delay is the time span during which the *telos* is waiting to happen – it is an intrinsic aspect of *journeying*. It is therefore indicative of the process of desiring. Delay here is the hiatus, the expectant wait with the excitement that elicits the movement of coming together. This suspension in time creates a tension that is released and becomes, in this context, satisfied in pleasure - the pleasure the loving touch creates. James Turrell illustrates this eloquently:

'I like the equality of sensuousness that comes from sensing. True sensuousness that comes from the act of sensing. It's like the tension that is there when you first meet someone – before you have touched or kissed. Tension is reduced by the first touching. Tension is reduced by the first kiss. Tension is reduced by the first time you make love. What I like to explore is the desire to touch, and the fact that even if there isn't anything to touch, it doesn't reduce the tension. It exists in the same way you feel light has always existed.' (Andrews, 1992: 50).

But of course in my work there *is* something to touch – the lover, the star, one's nature, even if this touch is eminently ineffable. The piece Aveo Amor could somehow illustrate what Turrell is talking about. His work Roden Crater⁹⁶ is about looking at the stars, the planets, the sky in its myriad of colours, from the earth. By looking at them the observer is not touching them in the physically but is reaching up – touching, in a sense – with the eyes. The tension Turrell refers to is always there, in suspension, until the vision of the celestial object is *aligned* with the observer's eyes. This is the moment of the satisfaction of desire, erotic tension 'reduced'.

In the case of Aveo Amor a delay occurs in between the *moment* of the alignment and the *duration* of the search, during which the two actively desire each other. I recall here that

⁹⁶ Turrell's ongoing project in the Arizona desert.

the alignment is the desire satisfied, consummated, upon which it is not desire anymore but its consummation, the *hierosgamos*. From this perspective, the distance between the chests of the lovers finds correspondence with the expanse between the horn and the star; and the alignment between the latter finds correspondence with the touch in the former.

Therefore both pieces contain, in their totality, the whole process of desire – from initial erotic impulse through the journey that brings them into close proximity, to the final the loving embrace.

In Seal Upon Your Heart the human body appears in relation to the glass in two ways: balancing on the top surface of the cube are the aligned, coinciding casts of the fingers of the lovers; on two of the cube's lateral surfaces, in orthogonal relation, is their skin prints. Both are images of the loving touch, which is essentially the arrest in form of an emotion. Due to the physical attributes of the glass cube, its receptivity to touch and its amenability to light, thus to vision, it is therefore possible to *see* one skin print in relationship to the other. From one geometrical perspective the prints align, from another they coincide. This is akin to what happens in the alignment between the horn and the star. (Figure 19). In Seal Upon Your Heart the distance between the horn and the star – 8.6 light years – has become compressed to the 8 centimetres of the thickness of the cube and to the coincidence of the two rings.

The casting process, besides creating form, also reverses, and in doing so it reveals the interior of the mould. The 'child' reveals, assumes, transports in itself, the character of the 'parents': the form of the 'mother' (the matrix), the nature of the 'father' (the cast substance). The cast reveals the characteristics of the form that gives origin to it, and it in reversing them, exposes them. A *truth* is enacted here, a truth about the process and the outcome. The final cast contains the sum of the activity that has brought it into being but also, significantly, contains the veracity about the form of the mother and the genuineness about the nature of the father.

Touch has left nothing untouched. In reversing, the most intimate aspects, the further hidden aspects become the most exposed. This is a moment of *ex-position*, a positioning on the exterior. 'To expose', being a verb, denounces action, here the movement towards

the exterior of what was once 'overshadowed'. When this occurs, an instance of truth emerges. What was further in the shadow becomes the most visible.

This is relevant in my work because my theme includes the revelation of the interior— to expose the *hidden* that is equated with *truth* – as revelation of that which is hidden in the beginning of the journey towards the lover, towards oneself.⁹⁷

In alchemy the shadow is associated with the body, hence with the microcosm. It is an alchemical idea – and also Gnostic (Pagels, 1990) – that interior light is contained within the darkness of matter. (Roob: 260). Being the shadow - the physical polarity of the spiritual, divine light - then the aim of the alchemist is to blend these two natures within him or herself. He or she would then illuminate the shadow, that is, he or she would turn the whole body into a 'resplendent thing'. The shadow is thus not 'negative' (as the Hebraic *R'a* is not negative but merely 'unknown'), but instead denounces that which requires being 'purified' by the action of the Spirit (illuminated by *Tob*). Newton already suspected that matter was light in a different state of vibration. He was convinced that light contributed to the activity of matter (Dobbs: 1982), an opinion later proved by Einstein's celebrated equation. The aim of the alchemist is therefore to raise the vibration of his or her body (his or her *shadow*), turning it into pure light. Consequently the alchemist works with and through his or her own shadow, his or her material body, in an attempt to have it penetrated and thus transmuted by the divine light. He or she does not deny the body. As we have seen in the image of the *Christus Resurrectus*, (Figure 15 and 16) the tomb is empty, what comes out of it is the purified body of the alchemist. The alchemist's shadow, i.e., his or her body, is the crucible – the 'tabernacle', as Didi-Huberman would say – his own womb of transmutation.⁹⁸

Fulcanelli writes: 'The crucible is the place where the Prima Matter suffers its passion as the Christ himself. That is where matter dies, to be reborn, now purified, spiritualised and transmuted.' (Fulcanelli *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, in Roob: 522).

In the artwork Seal Upon Your Heart one ring is reversed in relation to the other, one has its texture on the inside, the other on the outside. In the rings their *significant* side is the

⁹⁷ Considerations on the journey as revelation of the interior will be developed in Chapter 5 Saudade for the Future.

⁹⁸ For discussion of the light contained within matter, see Chapter 5 Saudade for the Future 'Revelation of the interior'.

textured side, the one with the skin cast on it, the exact place where the touch has occurred. It is specifically these significant surfaces that meet. The rings are placed one inside the other, with their significant sides in a touching relation. Re-enacting the initial touch. In the artwork the meeting of the surfaces occurs 'inside' the piece. The most external surface of the piece is smooth, as it is its most internal surface. This aspect reinforces the nature of the internal quality of touch, its feeling and loving dimensions. It also relates to the moulds and with sexual activity, in that these are *interior* occurrences – both in terms of the *locus* of sensitive perception and generative activity.

Succinctly, touch and the related shadow are associated with the unrepresentability of love and of the *hierosgamos* – the energy and the encounter cannot be represented. Paradoxically it is in that shadow that the love and the encounter are manifesting themselves. The *unseeability* of the encounter between the horn and the star, as well as the central hole in Seal Upon Your Heart indicate and also corroborate the invisibility of the *representation* of the touch.

All these intangibles are condensed in the gold.

4.4 Materials – gold, silk, glass

4.4.1 Gold

In this research, gold is associated with the concept of the unrepresentability of the attained teleology, that is, with the impossibility of the representation of the amorous encounter between the lovers, and also of the alignment of the Spiritual with the physical aspects of the being.

Gold is here also discussed from the point of view of the artwork understood as image.

Glass (or crystal) and silk, the other two fundamental materials used in the artwork, will be considered in tandem with the discussion on gold, because they share with the metal similar symbolic attributes. These stem directly from the materials' natural properties, all

related with their idiosyncratic relation with light. However each material has its own specific features which will be considered accordingly. First, gold will be discussed, followed by crystal and then silk.

In my work the agent of what happens – the encounter – is Eros, love, which as we have seen, is of fleeting nature and therefore not capable of being arrested in form. Likewise the touch between the lovers and the meeting of the being with itself are non-representable. This is for two different reasons. In the first case, as discussed before, the *feeling* quality that is a distinctive trait of the loving touch escapes representation. In the second case the *spiritual* quality of what happens is likewise unrepresentable - the form of the unicorn's horn is only its symbol: using Durand's expression, the helical shape emerging from the forehead of the 'triumphant initiate' is the 'epiphany of the mystery' (Durand, 2000: 11), the fusion between the bodies of the Personality and the Soul or Spirit. Hence, even though in both cases what happens is an aspect of touch, the real nature of the occurrence is intangible.

Gold is a material symbolically appropriate to express this insubstantiality. In religious iconography – which is where I am borrowing my influences from – in Didi-Huberman's words, gold occupies 'the visual place of mystery' . (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 147). Mystery, from a Christian perspective is, as referred to above in the text, that which exceeds human understanding, which naturally applies to the divine presence in the physical world.

In theological interpretation and religious iconography gold is associated from a symbolic perspective with heavenly light and with spiritual perfection, and furthermore with the place of the (in)visibility of the divine manifestation. (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 147; Chevalier, 1996: 430; and Janes, 1998). Gold is used to *reveal* the 'unvisualisable' and untouchable heavenly *presence*, which is an epiphanic occurrence. Epiphany is the appearance (here used not as verb but as *manifestation*, as *made visible* through light) of the thing that is undefined by being unlimited, by being 'non-enclosurable' in form. It indicates the place where the divine manifests, in its representational *form*. This association appears cross-culturally, for instance in the gilded images of the enlightened Buddha, in the golden flesh of the Egyptian gods and pharaohs, or in the African Banbara's fundamental deity Faro who wears a collar of gold which tells him 'secrets and

words of power'. The list is extensive and spans time and place. (Chevalier, 1996: 430). In this text however I will concentrate on the Christian, Western alchemical and esoteric traditions.

Gold, which 'must be considered as a symbolic substance' (Janes: 148) finds its association with the perfection and immutability of Heaven (by its incorruptibility) and with divine light (by its high reflective capacities) from its own natural properties.

It is called a 'noble metal. The...term [derives] from gold's excellent chemical stability which results in a high resistance to corrosion and oxidation'. (The World Gold Council). Gold's resistance to perishing is characteristic of eternity and perfection, against the corruptibility and decay of matter. It has an 'undying brilliance'. (Janes: 149).

Gold's chemical symbol is AU from Latin *aurora*, 'shining dawn', the morning light. (The World Gold Council). The word *aurora*, dawn, derives from gold's Latin name *aurum*. Partridge (1983) defines etymologically 'aurora [as]...the reddish-golden dawn-light, personified as Aurora, the Roman goddess of dawn...Adopted from [Latin], *aurora* [perhaps] derives from *aurum*, gold. Many scholars relate it to [East]'. (Partridge:32).⁹⁹

In fact, gold seems to reflect light as if emanating it. Gold's optical reflectivity is 95%, thus it returns almost all the light that shines upon it. (Chemistry & Environmental Dictionary) It 'reflects back that light and appears to shine itself.' (Janes: 148). It is therefore unsurprising that the association between gold and light has been established across cultures.¹⁰⁰

Spirituality and aesthetics meet in the Christian iconographic and symbolic tradition, whose objective was to 'express the sublime nature of God.' (Janes: 4). From late Roman times churches have been decorated with gold. The temples' interiors could be literally covered with it. ¹⁰¹ '[T]he golden altar [was] acknowledged to be heaven'. (Janes: 76).

⁹⁹ Likewise, in the Portuguese language, a language of Latin root, the word 'aurora' is used to identify the morning light. We say *quando a aurora chega*, meaning 'when dawn arrives', which also means 'sunrise' or 'the arrival of the light'.

¹⁰⁰ When I finished gilding the horn the sun came out from the clouds and hit the gold's surface. I was amazed at realising that the gold seemed to shine with the same colour and intensity as the sun outside.

¹⁰¹ 'The acceptance of the jewelled splendour of these churches was bolstered by the Jewish heritage of treasure decoration, as preserved in the sacred words of the Old Testament.' (Janes: 3). Portugal and Spain



Figure 45. Main Chapel, 1625-28, gilded wood, Lisbon, Saint Roque Church.

The altar, shrines, retables, and chapels were *par excellence* the places in the church where the divine presence was understood to manifest. In these locations ‘gold would catch the glimmers of the innumerable lamps which were lit so that [the] churches [would become] ‘generators of light’, physically as well as spiritually.’ (Janes: 151).

The biblical text relates divinity with light. Janes quotes Gregory of Nyssa: ‘God is light, the highest light, from which any other light though it seems exceedingly bright, is but a slight effluence and radiance extending downwards.’ (Janes: 74). The ‘brilliance’ of the churches’ interiors was ‘symbolic of the “splendour” of God and the “brightness” of Christian love.’ (Janes: 3).

are examples of countries where up to the 18th Century such decoration was used, due to the large amounts of gold imported from South America, specially Brazil in the Portuguese case.

‘Light was a premier metaphor for divine goodness’ [heavenly love and] ‘the primary quality of gold...was its glorious burning brilliance. The metal’s association was thus with the flaming *caritas* within a body.’ (Janes: 77), God’s ‘descending’ love pouring down into his creation and also the ‘ascending’ human love towards God.¹⁰² *Caritas* thus denotes the *alignment* of love between the divine and the human. Hence, according to Christian theology *Caritas* can be understood as the flow of loving energy that brings together the ‘low’ and the ‘high’.¹⁰³



Figure 46. Chapel of the Doctrine, 18th century, gilded wood, Lisbon, Saint Roque Church.

In churches it is not physical gold but spiritual gold that is represented. ‘God [is]...heavenliness...The golden light of the sun is associated with the light that shines

¹⁰² 1Jn 4: 16: ‘*Deus Caritas Est*’. Contemporary English translations translate the Greek *ho theos agape estin* as ‘God is love’. (Vatican Archives).

¹⁰³ In her book *Esoteric Psychology* Vol.2, Alice Bailey (1995) refers, as has been mentioned in this thesis, how Sirius is esoterically understood as the ‘cosmic centre of [Spiritual] light’ and is considered as ‘the source of energy for the ‘externalisation of the spiritual work on earth.’ (p.688). Later in the book she establishes a correspondence between gold and the star: ‘Influential and potent forces pouring from Sirius produce the stimulation of the head centre [of the disciple]. The secondary effect of these energies is upon the mineral kingdom, particularly upon that peculiar product, gold, and that enigma, money.’ (p.721) Therefore, being Sirius the source of the energy of love as expressed in the solar system and thus of the energies responsible for the spiritualization of matter (as seen above in the text), gold’s spiritual brilliance is directly associated with the star’s emanating energies.

from gold the metal. "Spiritual gold" is moral riches gained through suffering.' (Janes: 74).

Janes, quoting Saint Bede says that the metal is 'of the likeness of gold, and not true gold. Let us take it then that true gold denotes things incorporeal, unseen and spiritual; but that the likeness of gold, in which is not the Truth itself but only the Truth's shadow, denotes things bodily and visible". Such 'likenesses' include...the temple itself: "but the visible gold itself, just because it was visible, was not the true gold, but the likeness of that true and unseen gold." The implication of this is that a church filled with treasure is a pale *likeness* of heaven. Even the most precious Tabernacle was of this lower grade of precious metal, the earthly kind, which is nevertheless properly a symbol of the divine and is therefore properly dedicated to Christian use.' (Janes: 79).

Alchemy understands 'base metals as gold in potential, with gold as a symbol of human regeneration and transformation.' (Henderson: 194). Metals are considered as earth's embryos, and the transmutation they suffer inside the earth, until they become gold, is understood as equivalent to the alchemist's inner transmutation in his or her personal *athanor*, his or her own corporeal nature. (Burckhardt, 1997).¹⁰⁴ Alchemy's aim is the merging of opposites, the male and female aspects of the being, or the being's body and Spirit - the fusing of antithetical bodies. It attempts the paradoxical merging of opposites. 'Gold was thought to be composed [of the qualities] of both fire and water.' (Henderson: 194).

Alchemy's aim is the hierogamy between the body and the Soul, the achieving of the philosopher's stone i.e., the alchemical gold. This gold, like in the Christian case just mentioned, is a gold understood as 'spiritual', the metal being but an image of its heavenly counterpart. The perfected substance is thus 'the metal produced by the Philosopher's hieratic art, ... [it is] the living gold'. (Corbin, 1986: 78). If gold in Christian thought is identified with the divine light, the alchemist, in achieving his or her spiritual hierogamy has purified his or her nature, and has therefore reached his or her own gold.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter 2 'Methods and Processes'.

The alchemists' manipulations were made over a unique substance, the 'first matter' (*prima matter*) which was operated upon and treated so that it would progressively attain a state of 'purity, of perfect homogeneity, of balance between its Elements'. This 'first matter' would become the Philosophical stone which, 'projected over the common metals (lead, tin...) allowed them to become transmuted into gold.' The alchemist operates the 'nuptial union' of the joining of the Fire and the Water...this is the philosophical stone. 'All these operations, in the case of the esotericist, ... equally direct him to the acquisition of the Body of Resurrection.' (Corbin, 1986: 14).

From an esoteric point of view, as mentioned before, the alignment of the bodies brings about the enlightenment of the physical body, which becomes penetrated by the spiritual light emanating directly, uninterruptedly, from the Monad or Spirit.¹⁰⁵ Here the interpretations between Christian thought, alchemy and esotericism coincide. Gold always represents the luminous body – true nature of God and the Christ – likewise equated with the light pouring forth in the hierogamic encounter of the alchemist. The splendid body¹⁰⁶, is a body of spiritual, hence not visible, light. It is a spiritual state, a condition of divinity itself.

In Christian-inspired alchemy the purified, transmuted body of the alchemist is likened with the luminous body of the resurrected Christ.¹⁰⁷ This is demonstrated in the representation of the *Christus Resurrectus*, who stands for the perfected, transmuted nature of the alchemist. The alchemist thus shines with the same light as the resurrected Christ. Christ has said of himself: 'I am the light of the world.' (John 8:12).

Due to gold's interpretation as representing the place of the visibility of the divine – the place of epiphany – it therefore signifies that the thing being looked at is not the thing itself, it is only its *visible* aspect. It is only the *image* of the entity made able to be seen.

Frames of gold surrounding two-dimensional representations transform 'pictures' into 'images'. Didi-Huberman writes: 'the [golden] material threshold of a painting... forms something like a bridge between the "actual" or physical reality of the frame and a

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter 3 *Aveo Amor* 'Unicorn'.

¹⁰⁶ 'From "splendour" from Latin *splendidus*, which comes from *splendere*, to shine'. (Partridge: 653).

¹⁰⁷ After Christ's resurrection he appears to Paul: 'At midday, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me.' Ac 26: 13-14 (also Ac 9: 3 and 9: 5).

similitude [to divine things] symbolised by the ‘inactual’ divine light.” (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 148). The picture, due to the presence of gold – because of gold’s symbolical connotations - becomes the representation of an unrepresentability.

In singling out the picture from the world of manifestation, gold projects it ‘heavenwards’ into the nature of image. In this way, the painting as *picture* becomes, by the presence of the surrounding gold, an *image*.



Figure 47. Gilded arch in the Christ Convent’s church, 18th century, Tomar. An arch is a projection heavenwards.

To continue with Didi-Huberman: ‘The sparkle of golden backgrounds on the retables, and even more ... the golden elements *in relief* [that is, approaching *sculptural* depictions]... had as their goal the concentration of luminous effects on the parts of the representation that were, let us say, the most *immaterial*’. (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 148). The author is here discussing painting, namely Annunciations from the Quattrocento. Besides, the point being made in here is the relevance of gold in conferring a meaning of ‘otherworldness’ to the object it is associated with, be it painting, architecture or sculpture, the latter being the case in this research.

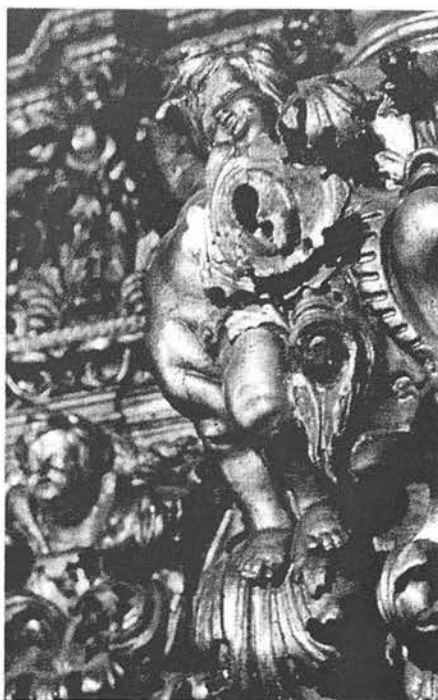


Figure 48. Cherubins, Chapel of the Doctrine (detail), 18th century, gilded wood, Lisbon, Saint Roque Church.

Consequently the use of gold in the artwork being dealt with in this research is to signify that the piece is an image in relation to what it is representing. But also that what the artwork attempts to present is unearthly and, accordingly, unrepresentable.

Therefore the artwork is an image: of touch; of a teleology; of a spiritualised and spiritualising relationship. All the *encounters* represented in the work are ‘marriages’ to be had in ‘heaven’. They belong, in the concept they attempt at representing, to the realm of the intangible. So the gold indicates that they are images but also that what is being looked at, what is being *shown*, is a sort of epiphany, fundamentally unrepresentable.

If, as quoted above, gold occupies ‘a place of mystery’, it points to that exact place where in the casting process the *inversion* between the mould and the cast occurs. In the horn and in rings the extremely thin layer of gold (respectively as leaf¹⁰⁸ and as plated surface) occupies the precise place of touch and reversal.



¹⁰⁸ a a ‘The crystal structure [the atomic arrangement of the atoms of an element when it is in its solid state] for metallic gold is face centred cubic [FCC] This crystal structure contributes to gold’s very high ductility since FCC lattices are particularly suitable for allowing the movement of dislocations in the

In the casting process this place of reversal coincides with the place of *touch* between the mould and the congealing substance. This is true for the casting of the horn and the same applies in the case of Seal Upon Your Heart. In the latter, two aspects are worth mentioning. On the one hand the reversing 'touch' between the mould and the cast which is a change in dimension from concave to convex, that is, from an *interior quality* to an *external* one. On the other hand the representation of the lovers' touch which, as we have seen, is non-representable, precisely because the loving sensation escapes arrest in form. In both cases gold occupies this place of touch and reversal which are in themselves unrepresentable. They thus remain a 'mystery'.

It is significant that the rings are gold plated.

The rings are cast in silver. Silver oxidises on its outmost surface. It is therefore akin to a 'skin', that in a human body connects it to the world outside the body – it is also through the skin that touch is felt. Skin ages, just like silver. By analogy, it is therefore possible to deduce that silver has a 'skin'. Following the same reasoning gold, because it does not react with the environment, being stable and immutable, does not have 'skin'. Therefore in the rings the permanence of the cast (as object) is reinforced by the absence of 'skin' in gold. Covering the silver cast with gold keeps its skin from ageing, thus rendering the cast immutable, 'eternal'.

Therefore, the cast skin is kept immutable because of the permanence of the cast as (stable) object but also from a symbolic point of view by being covered in gold. What we have in the artwork is therefore the setting into permanence of the representation of the encounter between the lovers. Upon a cubic, glass prism, which itself represents immutability in form. The encounter between the lovers is kept 'forever' in the casting. It is the *union* that is kept permanent and immutable, (non-ageing) upon the symbolic stability and perfection of the cube.

lattice. Such dislocation movement is essential for achieving high ductility.' Gold is extremely malleable (the extent to which a material can undergo deformation in compression before failure). In the annealed state it can be hammered cold into a translucent wafer 0.000013 cm thick. One ounce of gold can be beaten into a sheet covering over 9 square metres and 0.000018 cm thick. (World Gold Council). Gold's crystal structure being a *cube* can therefore be said to be 'set in perfection as the celestial Jerusalem'. (Chevalier, 1996: 912), which is 'built of gold' (Rev 21: 21).

Cube and rings, by being placed in direct relation, lend each other their symbolic characteristics. As discussed above, the cube represents the permanence of the manifested world, which is set in perfection, like the city of Revelation. This sense of perfection can poetically be enhanced because of the hierogamic quality expressed in the rings that 'bleeds' into the cube. It is the union in the spirit, or the spiritual nature of their union.

4.4.2 *Silk*

Silk shares qualities with gold – its brilliance, its shimmering light effects.¹⁰⁹ It is a shining, *splendid* substance. Silk catches light's reflections and distributes them on its surface, creating a glimmering effect that is instrumental in denouncing the presence of heavenly light in the same way that gold does in the Christian exegesis. Hence, being light 'such a powerful metaphor for goodness and excellence...not only gold, but liturgical equipment [including] silk vestments and hangings... all were developed in the early Christian centuries *primarily as receptacles and images of light.*' (Janes: 149).

Besides its relation with light and hence with gold, silk is in this research primarily considered from the point of view as the outcome of a process of transmutation.

In its process of metamorphosis from larva into butterfly the *Bombyx mori* constructs a silk cocoon. (Shao: 741). It is inside this enclosure that the silkworm transmutes itself from an earth-bound to a wing-borne creature. Therefore the enveloping silk is instrumental in the transition phase in the transmutational journey the animal undertakes.

The silk cocoon can thus be associated with a crucible of transmutation. In its *interior* the chrysalis, half stage between the larva and the butterfly, acquires wings and a body that is able to fly. The animal emerges from the enclosure *released* from earth boundedness. Similar to the mould in the casting process the transition is an interior occurrence, and happens in invisibility. Similarly, it is in the invisible interior of the cocoon that the 'truth' of the transmutational process resides. But also the truth of the animal itself – it is

¹⁰⁹ Silk's glistening appearance comes from the fibres' natural triangular prism-like structure, which allows the cloth to refract incoming light at different angles.

in this interior that the animal fulfils its nature, the inevitability of its destiny: to become a butterfly.

The cocoon is spun by the moving silkworm which accelerates and decelerates its head in arcs that are attached at points that correspond to each change of direction. From its mouth the animal segregates a thread of silk that it spins around its body in 'natural figures of *eight*'. (Shao: 741). The silkworm encircles itself with a myriad of 'eights', eight thus being the fundamental movement that is at the origin of the metamorphosis. Analogically speaking, the butterfly is one *octave* above the larva. Still analogically reasoning, the chrysalis, as the intermediate stage in the transmutation of the silkworm, becomes counterpoint with the figure of the octagon, the octagon being the eight-sided inscribed polygon in the circle. Therefore, the chrysalis stage corresponds in geometry to the rotation that transforms the square into the octagon. This is the active, motional part of the process that is responsible for the change – of the larva into butterfly, of the square into octagon. In both cases what is being enacted is a *resurrectional* process.

The conjuncture around silk further connects with this research in that the changes that occur are *interior* metamorphic processes, of a subtle nature, thus invisible, and ultimately unrepresentable. The *quality* of what happens, necessarily takes place in the 'shadow' of perception, because these are ultimately, ontological occurrences. These are instances that relate with the *nature* of the form.

Similarly, on a purely physical sense, in the casting process, the changes that occur take place within, inside a mould. From that mould, first encapsulated in darkness, the finally solidified cast emerges into full light once the mould is opened and the 'truth' of the form inside revealed.¹¹⁰

In the artwork, silk appears literally as the base, as the foundation, for the pieces Aveo Amor, Seal Upon Your Heart, and Saudade for the Future as the pillows upon which the objects rest. The themes of this research revolve around transmutation, resurrection, and elevation to the Spirit or the fundamental light. In brief, silk as material stresses and also confers the meaning of the teleological fulfilment of the nature of the being, which is

¹¹⁰ See Chapter 5 Saudade for the Future for considerations into the revelation of the interior as exposition of the 'truth' within.

theme in the artwork. The return to the Spirit where it *in initium* emanates from is the hermetic and alchemical premise.

4.4.3 Glass

Glass shares ‘divine’ qualities and connections with gold and silk. This once more has to do mainly with associations with light that glass establishes.

Glass is in a sense, in itself, a paradoxical substance. It is materially dense, yet it allows light to pass unimpeded through it. It is possible to see through it yet it is not possible to touch *into* it. This is therefore a sort of paradoxical coincidence, in that in glass there is a coincidence of opposing qualities – it is a physically impenetrable material that is permeable to light. Let us not forget that one of the distinctive traits of matter is its opacity to light. That is the reason why matter creates a shadow, which glass, albeit physical, does not.

Furthermore, glass is in its origin *opaque* sand. By the agency of *heat* (associated with passion and fervour¹¹¹) it *liquidizes* (liquid is related to emotions¹¹²) and thus becomes *invisible* to light. As in the alchemical and esoteric traditions it is the *emotions* that have to undergo purification in the human being in order for him or her to ‘ascend’ to the Spirit.¹¹³ Accordingly and analogically, it is therefore possible to suggest that the sand – as ‘original matter’, as *material prima* – has become ‘purified’, allowing light to shine through it unimpeded.

Dominic Janes quotes Gregory the Great, who reflected on ‘the strength and translucency of crystal, made as it was of *solidified water*.’ (Janes: 73).¹¹⁴ If glass can thus be understood as ‘solid’ water and being the latter symbolically representative of things of

¹¹¹ The word ‘fervor’ contains in itself the two significations: it can mean ‘intense and passionate feeling’ and also ‘intense heat’. (Soanes, 2005).

¹¹² Emotions express themselves through a watery quality in the human body. As sweat; as tears, of happiness or sadness; as segregation of bodily fluids in the case of sexual desire.

¹¹³ ‘The emotional body [is] characterised by feeling and desire, that acts most potently, in the majority of cases, upon the physical body. This latter is regarded by the esotericist as a pure automaton, driven into action by the desire nature and energised by the vital energy. [Eventually] another “body”, the mind body, comes into being and activity, and gradually assumes an active and natural control...the emotional nature, in its turn is controlled by the mind, and is rendered still and untroubled, and, therefore, presents no barrier to the inflow of spiritual knowledge to the brain.’ (Bailey, 1987b: 57-58, 210-211).

¹¹⁴ My italics.

an emotional nature, then the glass cube is able to represent, as image, the *emotion* of the lovers – contained in the touching rings and in the skin prints – *solidified* in it.

On the concept of the transparency of glass, once again it is useful to make use of Christian exegesis for its revelatory observations regarding the symbolic characteristics of glass, which stem from its natural attributes.

In Revelation it is said that ‘the street of the city [the heavenly, *pure*, Jerusalem] *was* of pure gold, as it were transparent glass’. (Rev 21: 21). ‘The image is of a crystal in which nothing is hidden, wherein there are no shameful secrets and in which God’s light can shine unimpeded. Revelation 21: 18 even makes heavenly gold into something transparent, in that it compares the street of the heavenly city, which is golden, to clear glass... Revelation 4: 6, wherein the throne of God, there is seen as ‘a sea of glass like crystal... [I]n glass nothing which appears external other than as exists within... Transparency so related in that it could be understood as the image of humility (God’s light flowing unimpeded) and honesty (because nothing is hidden).’ (Janes: 73).

From an alchemical perspective glass is considered as the product of a refining and purifying process. Henry Corbin discusses glass as symbolic material of the purification the alchemist undergoes during his journey towards the alchemical stone or ‘Resurrection Body’. (Corbin, 1989: 201).

Glass starts off as silica and potash, the main constituents of sand. These are said to correspond to the ‘elemental material body, dense and opaque flesh’. When subjected to fusion by the agency of the fire’s heat its impurities and dirt are excluded and what is left is with clear glass, which is ‘homologous to the spiritual body’. A material which, after undergoing trials of alchemical transmutation – which at each consecutive step transmutes the nature of the *prima material* – lets light, symbolic of the light of the Spirit, pass unreservedly through it.

From the opacity and density of sand emerges a body in a transparent subtle state. ‘The latter is unquestionably the same mineral substance, yet it is not. It is something other.’ The glass, as alchemically purified substance, was contained inside the sand. As *spirit* of

the sand, it was 'hidden in the essential depths of the mineral substance'. (Corbin, 1989: 200-203).¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ In the Islamic alchemical tradition studied by Corbin, glass is an intermediate step in the purification, revelatory process of the essential spiritual nature of the alchemist. Glass undergoes further purification until it becomes diamond, which according to this tradition, is the symbol par excellence of the 'Resurrection Body'. However in here I am not discussing the nature of diamond. Rather, I am concentrating on glass as the outcome of a process of purification and as substance that blends in itself complementary aspects and through which light – symbolically associated with the Spirit and the divine – can flow freely. For further discussion on the revelation of the true spiritual nature contained within the depths of the material body see Chapter 5 Saudade for the Future.

Chapter 5: Saudade for the Future

This chapter deals with the contextual material used for the creation of the piece Saudade for the Future. It is subdivided as follows:

- 1) Sculptural Processes
 - a. Description of the piece
 - b. Foundational Image
 - i. Oracle's revelation (the presence of the child)
 - ii. Earliest memory (the child looking at the stars)
- 2) Revelation of the Interior – the light and the truth within
- 3) Ontological Journey – journey, saudade, Eros, *hierosgamos*



Figure 49. Saudade for the Future (2006)

5.1 Sculptural Processes

5.1.1 Description

Saudade for the Future consists of a child's red felt dress turned inside-out resting on a square white silk pillow measuring 60 centimetres, placed directly on the floor. The dress has two gilded buttons displaying anchors.

This piece is distinct from the two hitherto considered in that it is an appropriated object. It was taken directly from life, where it functioned on a practical level – to offer protection and warmth – and has now been singled out to perform an artistic task. It has hence been poetically manipulated.

Aveo Amor and Seal Upon Your Heart are constructed objects. Conversely, the dress (as an item of clothing) has been in existence in the world for the last three decades. Its 'elevation' to artistic object has been recent.

The dress has been interfered with in a minor way for the purposes of this research. The manipulations were made to suit an intended philosophical meaning (life as a conscious journey, as search for an ontological truth) making use of poetic incursions: such as the turning inside-out and the gilding of its buttons.

Fundamentally the three pieces share the same essential thematic premise – journey towards the lover, encounter with the lover. Saudade for the Future however introduces an autobiographical aspect: the use of *my* dress introduces this personal slant. Also, as indicated in 'Foundational image – Saudade for the Future' other issues of personal circumstances contribute to the emergence of this particular artwork.

Nevertheless, however inescapable the autobiographical bearings, it is not paramount in this research and I will not therefore speculate on it. Autobiography is used in this text merely as a *circumstantial* originator of this specific piece.

To be precise, it is not my intention to create a ‘personal’ work or a work which is about *me*. The piece of clothing could in fact belong to anyone else. My interest is to depict in this research the sense of a person’s life journey from an ontological perspective. Having said that, it is true that this represents my own philosophical perspective of ‘life as process’ and of reaching out towards the ontological integrity. But that endeavour is present in the artwork as a whole and not merely in Saudade for the Future.



Figure 50. Saudade for the Future. *The inverse is revealed.*

5.1.2 Foundational Image

The oracle’s revelation (the presence of the child)

In March 2005 I went to consult an oracle.¹¹⁶ I sat in front of a woman in her fifties who asked for the 90 minute blank tape I had been told to bring along. She inserted the tape into the tape-recorder, pressed ‘play’ and proceeded to concentrate whilst looking intensely at me. She then closed her eyes, for what seemed a long period and then,

¹¹⁶ The date is the 25th of March 2005, London.

opening her eyes, started talking. 'I see you as a three year old. She is here and is now standing beside you'. She pointed with her hand to my right. 'Something happened then, the revelation continued, the child is the memory of you as a three year-old... something happened [then] and that memory is back ... The child is your memory coming back. She is now taking over and she needs your attention. She is ungrounded ... [Because of that] she ungrounds you, but the sculpture grounds you ... The sculpture will also ground her... She daydreams, she lives in her head. She must get into her body... she has her body dissociated from her mind ... she needs to become aware of her body and not run away from it. She needs to be calmed down, connected to the here and now ... She needs to connect with the free flow of energy within her body that reaches out to her mind and beyond her body and mind ... she wants to come down [to connect with the body] but she is afraid ... she needs to be grounded, she needs to establish contact with reality ... she needs to let the energy flow from her mind into her body and the other way around...A dragon ... its feet are firmly implanted on the ground and its head is on the clouds...you need to have her establish the connection between her mind and her body, to let the energy flow. It is now up to you to do this. She is restless, you have to calm her down.' After I got up and was ready to leave the oracle said 'you must mother your child.'

As I was leaving the room I was perfectly aware of the necessity of acknowledging the child, who, according to the oracle, was following me as a phantom – as an invisible shadow. The oracle had said that in order to ground the child I should 'mother her', and in my mind it had very quickly become clear that the way to recognise her presence lovingly and attempt to satisfy her needs should be made through sculpture – a grounding activity itself, as the oracle had said. Indeed, this seemed to me at the time the correct way of making her tangible, visible, so that I could directly, in a substantial manner, deal with her. So I started thinking what could I have access from that time in Africa when I was three years old. Something which would possibly carry her memory. Something where she might have left her imprint.

The only surviving objects from the time when I was three are a photograph taken in Beira, Mozambique, where my family and I were then living, and a red felt dress made by my grandmother with a coloured embroidery on the front and two anchor button on its

straps. The dress was made to withstand the Mozambican *cacimbo*, a fresh fog that sways in the air and falls on the dry grass between July and September.

The red dress seemed adequate for my purposes, and therefore I decided to transform it into a sculpture. The dress was, in material terms, the closest I could get to the child. Because the child used it, it was directly bringing in her presence. The oracle having said that sculpting had the capacity of bringing into *alignment* her body and her mind, if the sculpture could perform this linking, then using the dress – a physical, concrete object which her skin touched – was a symbolic action, an attempt to actively bring her from her ‘invisible’ reverie into a sense of concrete existence and experience.

I was thinking from the perspective of the child becoming grounded by a physical object that was associated with her corporeal reality. Turning the dress into a piece of artwork was imbued with an operative, *magical* capacity, which I decided to use. A way of uniting the two complementary aspects of the child visible and invisible, body and mind.

Earliest memory (the child looking at the stars)

I was curious about this three year-old. Concentrating on the photograph, I tried to sink back into the family’s time in Africa and events then. As I concentrated on that period a memory arose in my mind. I am convinced this is my earliest memory. The dress, dating from the time when I was three, was therefore present at the time of the imprinting in my mind of my first memory. Realising this was a coincidence I realised with happy surprise.



Figure 51. Mozambique 1973.

I recall it being night time. I was running on the balcony at the front of our house. Several people were standing on the balcony where a party was taking place and my mother was visibly pregnant with my brother. The adults were talking about flying saucers and there must have been a mentioning of them coming from the sky: I looked up and *clearly seeing the stars* I imagined a flying saucer appearing from between them. Scared, I ran towards my mother.

The child, so the oracle said, was itself a memory. And this memory (the child) was bringing back another memory, which proved to be instrumental in the development of the piece Aveo Amor. It revealed a significance of the stars in my psyche and the significance of the emotion I felt when carving the horn.¹¹⁷ The child as a memory, according to the oracle, stemmed from emotions experienced in Africa, and what I felt when looking at the dawn sky thirty-one years later was also an emotion. Therefore, it was a feeling that revealed a useful way of dealing with another, later, sensation. Consequently, the ‘ungrounded’ emotion – as a child – brought a solution for the ‘grounding’ which, according to the oracle, is making sculpture.

Hence, the memory of the African night sky is significant because it solved – clarified and resolved – the piece Aveo Amor. The feeling I had when looking at the dawn sky when the horn was being carved suddenly made poetic sense. The feeling experienced that dawn in November 2004 was already significant *before* the surfacing of the 1973 memory because it was clear and strong. Yet, when it happened, at first I did not know what to do with it, how to integrate it into the piece, if at all. It was *after* the access to the African memory that there was an exposure, a revelation that the stars were somehow relevant to my subjectivity. It was the *coincidence* between the memory and the emotion that indicated the relevance of ‘the stars’. It became clear that it was necessary to use the connection – the horn should therefore point at the stars – or at a particular star as it turned out to be. Mirroring the child’s gaze back in 1973. It was the closing of the circle, as it were, of meaning.

Reversing the dress was a poetic action to signify an aim, a theme in this research: the *intention* of the ‘revelation of the interior’, the ‘interior’ here understood as a person’s ontological essence. The fulfilment of this ontological task is understood to unite the two

¹¹⁷ See Chapter 3 Aveo Amor ‘Foundational Image’.

natures, the corporeal and the ineffable. The energy between the mind and the body of the child in alignment: that is, the child wholly grounded, the dragon, the oracle mentioned, with its head on the clouds and his feet on the ground, achieved. But that necessarily remains an ambition.

At the beginning of my conscious life (because it is when I have a sense of person looking *out at the world*) stands the image of a starry sky. This first memory thus coincides with the notion of me as a conscious being. From then onwards I see the hypothetical possibility of consciously *remembering* my circumstances. Therefore I see my first memory as the beginning of a conscious voyage of self-discovery.

If I see my earliest memory as the first time I am conscious of the world outside me, of me looking at it, when as an adult I feel a connection with stars it is as aim: in my sensation, the horn existed between my chest and the morning star seen through the window. The horn was therefore *connecting* my chest (subjectively felt to be at the 'beginning' of a *journey*) and the morning star (which existed at its 'end'). Hence, the stars appear at the onset of my sense of person who looks out at the world and later, as a sense of *telos*, in the image of an artwork, that carried with it a poetic sense of a life's journey.

From that perspective, the dress, which I wore back in 1973, stands symbolically at the origin of the path of Self-awareness, of sense of identity of myself. That it is presented inside-out, thus revealing its *interior*, indicates the *intention* I have today of searching for my ontology. Yet it is here strongly emphasised the extrapolation from personal issues. It is the artwork's intention the depiction of a universal process. As I have said before, the artwork is not personal, but about a human condition as I understand it.

The 'revelation of the interior' entails a journey, which starts at the beginning of the reversing process until the complete exposure of the inverse is completed. It requires honesty, a 'truth' exposed. This is a journey of ontological proportions, which consciously tries to access the inner world, contained in the body, first as Soul, then as Spirit. Turning the dress inside-out was the poetic image I found to indicate that intention of complete becoming of the interior into the exterior.

5.2 Revelation of the Interior

In the artwork and in this written component, the notion of *interior* is poetically interpreted as the light and the truth existing within the form. Reversing the dress, in order to artistically suggest the revelation of the ontological essence within, is the fundamental aspect being considered in this section of the text.

This poetic aspect is mirrored by the alchemical and esoteric premise of light contained within matter. The text considers the interior from the esoteric perspective of the interior equivalent to the quality aspect inside form and the inextricability between the two. This inseparability is an aspect of the casting process.

This means that the life essence that animates the form and is ultimately responsible for the appearance of substance as its outward aspect is contained within the form itself. This is a characteristic attribute of manifestation which, being the result of duality, contains both aspects. These will be discussed below. As illustration for this argument, the creative antithetical presence of light and shadow in the biblical story of the Annunciation will also be considered.

Issues of interiority will be discussed, yet not from an aspect of invisibility as examined previously¹¹⁸ but from the point of view of the essence, equated with light, contained in phenomena, and making it pulsate with life.

The dress is turned inside-out. Its interior is revealed.

The red felt dress in Saudade for the Future is reversed, thus exposing its interior. The cut of the scissors, the hand-made stitches, the threads that hold the hems, these are all plainly visible upon looking at the reverse of the dress. (Figure 53) The stitches that create the embroidery and also some delicate fraying of the felt can also be observed. In the turned inside-out garment it is possible to see that which is normally hidden. This hidden construction is fundamental in the determination of the dress' external appearance.

¹¹⁸ See chapter 4 Seal Upon Your Heart 'Touch-Casting'.

This concept of reversal has parallels with the setting of a cast inside the mould and its opening, i.e., the revelation of that which is hidden by the opacity of form, in this case the closed matrix.

The casting process reveals the interior of the mould in the external surface of the cast. As in the reversed dress, there is no possible separation between the two dimensions, the internal and the exterior: one gives origin to the other and they are inextricably linked. In the dress this is apparent from the point of view of the object itself – one surface is the reversed of the other. In the casting process this inextricability is from the point of view of the *process* of casting, and is apparent in the fact that it is an interior form that gives shape to an exterior appearance.

Furthermore the turning inside-out of the dress can be understood as equivalent to the opening of the mould. Reversing *opens* the dress in the same way that the cast in reversing the mould and the cast being the mould reversed exposes the matrix, that is, the *formal* origin of the cast. As in the dress, reversal turns the more hidden into the more apparent. This is an act of honesty that is similarly made apparent when looking at the construction of the dress – the cut pattern, the severed material, the stitches, et cetera. It is possible to see how it was made. The construction is therefore publicly shared. There is a *forensic* quality about it: processes are exposed.¹¹⁹

The aspects of honesty and of public display are relevant in the artwork in the sense that in it there is a search for the nature *within*. This is equated with the search for an ontological truth and is ultimately the poetic reason for Saudade for the Future.

In Saudade for the Future and in Seal Upon Your Heart it is in the interior of the objects that is understood to reside their essence, specifically, of that which they attempt to represent. This sense of *interiority* in the objects is in this research used to stand poetically for the fundamental nature of the being, further down the text equated with light.

¹¹⁹ The word 'forensic' originates in the Latin *forensis* meaning 'in open court, public'. (Soanes: 677).

5.2.1 Artwork: the objects with the essence in their interior

The significance of the interior as essence is also apparent in Seal Upon Your Heart, a piece where the loving touch, a fundamental aspect represented, happens *inside* the object. It is in the interior of the piece that the cast skin re-touches.

However if in the text 'Touch-Casting',¹²⁰ the interior was considered from a perspective of visual unrepresentability (due to the opaque nature of the metal and the *sensation* of loving touch likewise escaping representation) here it is the interior as spiritual essence and ontological truth that is relevant. This concept is found in the esoteric and alchemical perspectives and is also found in Christian thought.

As previously discussed, this essence, being spiritual, is universally associated with light identified with the heavenly glow.¹²¹

If the interior as shadow and ontological truth are unrepresentable *in themselves*, it is therefore necessary to make use of conceptual and iconographic manoeuvres of representation: these stratagems have been the reversing of the dress, which in being turned inside-out has its inside revealed, and is thus capable of physical *illumination*, and the use of gold which, as discussed, carries symbolic associations with the representation of the (unrepresentable) divine light.

Gold appears in the piece Saudade for the Future on the buttons, which have been gilded. (Figure 53) The metal is in this piece used to denounce the spiritual aspect of the *action* of reversing the dress. This inversion corresponds to the intention of depicting the quality of something which goes beyond the physical action of reversing. It also elevates the material aspect of the dress as piece of cloth, thus 'spiritualising' it. Here gold stresses the *interior* nature of the reversal aspiring to be an act of ontological significance.

In this research it is the spiritual light equated with the life pulsating within matter and form that cannot *itself* be represented. Again, as with touch, it is what life *does* that is possible to portray. Life is in permanent flux, it is constantly becoming. It moves *in* and

¹²⁰ Chapter 4 Seal Upon Your Heart 'Touch-Casting'.

¹²¹ See Chapter 4 Seal Upon Your Heart discussion on gold in 'Materials – Gold, Silk, Glass'..

upwards, expressed in the journey as movement towards the essential nature of the being. What life *does* is that it *reverses* the being, not leaving anything untouched, nothing unexposed to the light of self-consciousness. This aspect will be returned to below.

5.2.2 *Quality as the interior in esoteric thought: the Hebrew Maïm*

As described, the reversing of the dress is a statement of an intention, the aim being to reveal the true nature of the being, spiritually understood to be within it. The term ‘spiritual’ has been here used according to the esoteric definition offered by Bailey, and already quoted in the Introduction to this thesis. Because of the pertinence of the concept to this work, it is repeated here: ‘All activity which drives the human being forward towards some form of development – physical, emotional, mental, intuitional, social – if it is in advance of his present state is essentially spiritual in nature and is indicative of the livingness of the inner divine entity.’ (Bailey, 1987:1).

This spiritual aspect dwelling in the core of form is that which the author further down the book terms ‘quality’: ‘[a principle] which energise[s] each level of the cosmic physical plane and which [is], in reality, working in and through ...substance... [It] is that which has been the source of form production on any specific level.’ (Bailey, 1987:64).

In the phenomenological world, ‘the world of external appearance and of tangible forms’ (Bailey, 1991: 193), quality is equated with the life that pulsates in matter and is thus understood to give it life. Quality is ‘form brought into being [i.e., existence] by the relation of spirit and matter.’ (Bailey, 1991: 18).

This is what Annick de Souzenelle (1997) defines by the *Mi* and the *Ma* in the Jewish tradition. The author clarifies how on the second day of biblical creation the original unity, *Maïm*, the primordial waters, separate into what the Hebraic tradition calls the *Mi* and the *Ma*, respectively the waters above and below the firmament. Gen 1: 6-7: ‘And God said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters

from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* above the firmament: and it was so.¹²²

Mi and *Ma* are therefore the polarised aspects of the *Maim*, and these are understood to generate duality in manifestation. The *Mi* stands for 'the archetypical, non-manifested reality' and the *Ma* to 'the world of manifested multiplicity in its different levels of reality'. (Souzenelle, 1997: 16).

Therefore the *Mi* and the *Ma* are seen to be 'distinct from each other, yet not separated'. (Souzenelle, 1997: 18). From this perspective the former is understood to be the internal, spiritual aspect of man and of all appearance, whereas the latter is taken to be the physical, manifested counterpart of the *Mi*. The *Mi* is viewed as dwelling *within* the *Ma* and all spiritual evolutionary paths are made from the *Ma* (external, apparent), towards the *Mi* (internal, essential).

In the dress, as in any body considered from a purely formal perspective, the interior and the exterior exist in a state of inseparability. That is, it is not possible to have an object without its 'reversed' interior side.

Acknowledging this, but more fundamentally by poetically establishing a connection with the *living* form, a person in this case institutes an *effective*, direct rapport between the body and the Spirit, the *Ma* and the *Mi*.

In the case of the child (represented by her dress), her body and mind understood as being the two complementary aspects of her being – one material and the other spiritual – the establishment of the conscious connection between the two has the poetic capacity of finally grounding her, of bringing into alignment her polarised aspects.¹²³

From a purely methodological perspective, in the casting process, this relation of intimate co-dependency between internal and external dimensions is relevant - the internal surface

¹²² The firmament is called *Shamain* and is that which connects the two waters. The Hebraic word *Shamain* is composed of the words *Maim* (the waters) and *Shem* (the Name). The Name is YHWH, that which ultimately realises the true nature of man, his divine aspect. *Shem* is situated at the core of the firmament (*Shamain*), and the latter being that which connects the inferior and superior waters, it is therefore the place of the resolution of their polarity. (Souzenelle, 1997)

¹²³ See 'Foundational image' for the piece *Saudade for the Future* earlier in this chapter.

of the mould, the external plane of the cast. These are in direct rapport for the *formal identity* of the resulting object.

Casting, by reversing and then overturning the reversed form, makes the form itself (as cast) appear. Issues of internal and external quality are present in the successive steps in the formation of a specific shape. It is the direct and ‘private’ relation between the inner and the outer surfaces that gives rise to the form. Therefore the form’s fundamental nature, here poetically understood as that which is deeper *inside* the mould becomes the more accessible, the more visible in the cast. The concave becomes the convex. These are ontologically the same, existing in a relation of formal reversibility – it is the *same* form inside-out. Analogically, this aspect is instrumental for the illustration of the spiritual process as revelation of that which is essential from an ontological point of view, as it exists further within.

The reversed dress precisely enacts this. The dress corresponds to the opened mould and also to the cast as reversed mould. The dress reveals its interior, an ontological place, which is not only generative but is also ‘true’. It is generative from the perspective of establishing the alignment between the child’s mind and her body (thus symbolically actively *realising* her *Maïm*), and also, more fundamentally, towards a universal perspective, by instituting the alignment of the being with its inner nature, the ontological ‘truth’, its *telos* of life’s journey.

5.2.3 *The Annunciation as the creative merging of light and shadow*

The biblical story of the Annunciation, described by the evangelist Luke, is concurrent with the divine impregnation itself. The same narrative has previously been used in this text to suggest the generation of form inside matter.¹²⁴ Here it serves to illustrate the creative capacities of the *coincidence* of light and matter, from the perspective of the presence – and the placing – of light within matter.

In the Annunciation, Lk (1: 26-38), the angel Gabriel appears to Mary and pronounces her divine maternity. The angels’ words deal with three aspects: divine brilliance (*gratia*),

¹²⁴ Chapter III Seal Upon Your Heart ‘Touch-Casting’.

the shadow come from above (*obumbratio*) and a body to be born (*quod nascetur*). (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 200). Respectively, ‘O favoured one [endued with grace!]’; ‘the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee’; ‘thou shall conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son.’ (Lk 1: 28, 35, 31)¹²⁵.



Figure 52. Anonymous Florentine, *Miraculous image of the 'Santissima Annunziata'*, 14th century, Florence, Church of the Santissima Annunziata.

During the occurrence Mary is ‘filled with grace’, a luminosity that Didi-Huberman refers to as ‘the sublimity of a *lux nuova* [a new light] that comes to illuminate Mary from within, so that her grace can symmetrically shine forth on others, on humanity as a whole: Mary *illuminata in alios*, source of light that humanity must receive to understand its chance for redemption.’ (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 197). The product of this light’s impetus is the child Jesus.

In the narrative, light is placed inside a body whose interior is in darkness, a light that has a shadow as its source. Therefore shadow has two versions here. On the one hand God appears as a shadow and hence covers the Virgin’s body. This, as we have seen, is the

¹²⁵ The quotation from Lk 1: 28 is from the Amplified parallel version of the King James Bible, which indicates this to be the ‘literal translation’. (fn j: 1315). The other two quotations are from the King James version.

way that God, being *unseeable*, shows Himself to human eyes.¹²⁶ A shadow appears in order to reveal the unrepresentable *light* that is God Himself.¹²⁷ On the other hand there is Mary's *body*, which precisely as material, both casts a shadow and has its interior in shadow. It is therefore from within (or behind) a shadow that light is projected and hence placed within another shadow.

However the main point being made here is the story's suggestion of the generative capacity of the paradoxical co-presence of light and shadow in generating a living body.

The Annunciation itself, because of its coincidence with the Impregnation, can in fact be looked at as a *hierosgamos* – the marriage between the Virgin and the divine eternity. The son hence produced is not 'any' son, but one who will blend in himself the two fundamental natures of his parents, the luminous and the human, in a hierogamic resolution, which mirrors the one which has given origin to him.

Therefore, the son being the product of a sacred marriage (which is theologically the product of the encounter of God and woman, and cosmologically the encounter of the polarised principles, light and shadow) this somehow predicts that he himself will resolve his own polarity, inherited from his parents.¹²⁸

Mary stands at the centre of the crossing of the two principles of light and shadow. She stands at the core of the cross of the vertical spiritual branch of light and the horizontal branch of matter.¹²⁹ She is the vehicle for the bringing forth into the manifested world the child, outcome of the sacred marriage. It is possible to relate her giving birth to the child with the effort that matter has to undergo in order to realise its own spirituality. ('the time of her delivery is in pain' (Isa 26: 17). In the artwork this finds correspondence with the 'effort' of turning the dress inside-out, poetically corresponding to the purification of matter, which is associated with the burning of the inert in matter - a burning that

¹²⁶ See Chapter 4 *Seal Upon Your Heart* 'Touch-Casting.

¹²⁷ The paradox has a poetic and paradoxical quality to it: the light of God being unrepresentable, he chooses that very thing that obscures the zenithal (celestial) light to make himself presentable, visible!

¹²⁸ This resolution will happen on the cross during Christ's Passion, esoterically identified with the fourth initiation, that of the 'Crucifixion [or] the Great Renunciation ...the death of the lower nature.' (Bailey, 1989: 23).

¹²⁹ See Chapter 4 *Seal Upon Your Heart* 'Cube – anagogia from the centre of the cross', for the two branches of the cross, one corresponding to the Spirit (masculine principle), the other to matter (feminine principle), and the anagogical aspect stemming from their meeting.

spiritualises it (Bailey, 1992). God Himself does not have a physical body, hence His appearing as a cloud or shadow. Therefore He requires the Virgin's body to place His seed of light. 'In the Incarnation, visible light glorifies and gives form to "the shadow of the flesh" in order to reveal itself to the human world'. (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 199). Mary is therefore sanctified (hence the angels' salutation 'blessed *art* thou among women' (Lk 1: 28)), by being able to combine in herself the two aspects *in order to produce* the 'perfect' son. The Virgin's body is the place where the transmutation of matter occurs and from where life, animated by the light as divine attribute, emerges. Or, as Didi-Huberman says, 'the Virgin is a place of mystery' (Didi-Huberman, 1995: 193) that is, the place of anagogical resolution.

For my purposes, the biblical story is able to elucidate that not only manifested life (versus unmanifested, i.e., without form) is the product of the creative interplay between the polarities light and shadow, but also that Christian 'salvation', the esoteric 'alignment', the soteriological aspect of alchemy, is accomplished by creatively uniting the two.

In alchemical thought, light is likewise understood to exist within matter. (Burckhardt, 1997). According to this perspective, matter is light in waiting, as lead is gold in the process of transmutation. Christ's state after the Passion – the *Christus Resurrectus* – stands at the conjunction of spiritualised matter and materialised Spirit. He *embodies* the anagogical movement, therefore he is the image of the aim of the alchemist, the spiritual gold. The Annunciation, as hierogamy itself, announces the paradoxical merging of the two natures in one entity, the son. The initial sacred marriage somehow offers the *guarantee* that the antithetical co-presence of light and shadow *will be* resolved. The biblical story suggests the necessity of marrying within oneself the conflict to give birth to the true nature within the person. The alchemist's gold is precisely said to be the merging of opposing aspects, fire and water, Spirit and matter. (Henderson, 2003).

In Saudade for the Future the light that was placed inside the Virgin's body is artistically equated with the light that is intended to purify the matter of the dress (the latter here standing for the child, *any* child), and which is therefore able to bring forth the his or her grounding as alignment.

By being reversed, the garment suggests the bringing into perception of its 'Spirit'. Poetically, its Spirit is materialised by making visible to the *eyes* its interior (its quality, which is essentially spiritual), which before reversal was in the shadow of its interior, therefore unseeable.

It conversely spiritualises its own matter (the fabric) by the very act of consciously realising— in the poetic step of *exposing* it – its interior nature (the pattern, the stitches). The 'son' can therefore be said to have been born: in the turned inside-out dress the marriage between its shadowy interior (which later becomes its illuminated outer surface) and its shining exterior is consummated.

5.3 The ontological journey

In this section the journey as path towards the unity of the being will be considered. Here the trio *saudade* / Eros / *hierosgamos* as the three aspects of the ontological journey will be discussed. From an initial state of being *one*, the individual is hence separated from his or her counterpart and feels the pain of separation. This condition will be here equated with *saudade*. Eros will be considered as the force that impels each separated expression of the being back to each other. The *hierosgamos* is understood as the return to the primordial ontological whole.

The concept of the ontological journey is the central notion in the artwork. It is the essential *movement* enacted in the pieces.

Therefore, in Saudade for the Future the journey is one of reversal, and is enacted in the poetic action that in progressive stages unfolds the interior of the garment, having as outcome the full visibility of its inside. In Aveo Amor the relevant aspect is the movement of the horn that follows the earth's cosmic path and which culminates on the annual alignment between the object and the star. In Seal Upon Your Heart the journey present in the artwork is twofold. It is shown, on the one hand, by the implicit distance that connects the movement between the chest imprinted on the glass and the touch which culminates on the rings placed on the cube and stand for the erotic quest accomplished. On the other hand it is enacted on the anagogical – spiritualising – movement from the

centre of the imaginary cross inscribed on the form of the cube which is in line with the placing of the two rings. Lastly, the form of the octagon, which symbolically performs the resurrection of the being, and which likewise contains the sense of journey in the geometrical *rotation* of the square that gives origin to the octagonal shape of the room, and which contextualises the artwork in display inside it.

5.3.1 *Journey as ontological process*

From a symbolic perspective journeys do not correspond to a change of location. Rather, they are understood as a process of self-discovery. The richness of the symbolism of the journey 'is condensed into the quest for truth ... and into the search for a spiritual centre... [They perform] 'a spiritual progress ... a series of ordeals which prepare the candidate for initiation' (Chevalier, 1996: 555). This concept of tribulation is akin to what Alice Bailey makes correspond to the uneasy and difficult burning of all which separates the different manifest bodies of the human being, and which will ultimately result in esoteric alignment. (Bailey, 1992).

The spiritualising journey is not easy and it is necessary to remain grounded amidst the ordeals that life brings about. The dress is made of felt, which is a soft material without an internal structure to keep it standing on the strength of its cloth structure. However the dress, as displayed, manages to keep its uprightness because of the presence of the two buttons on its straps. When the buttons are unfastened, the dress folds over itself and loses its upright integrity.

The buttons display anchors. (Figure 53) Symbolically, anchors stand for 'firmness, solidity [and] tranquillity ... they [represent] the stable part of our being [amidst] the flux of the elements... [anchors] stand as a support in the troubles of life.' (Chevalier, 1996: 21). From the perspective of the artwork, the fact that the buttons show anchors on their faces is a coincidence, since the buttons were placed on the dress when it was first made in 1973 and almost certainly there was no symbolic intention on the part of my grandmother in their choosing at the time. It is in fact serendipitous that they would later suit the purposes of this research, especially by having been the only remaining object surviving from that time.



Figure 53. *Saudade for the Future*, gold plated anchor buttons.

The anchors therefore actively maintain the dress's standing position. This uprightness enacts the vertical quality of the desired spiritual ascent, possibly through the grounding effect of the buttons. The buttons can be equated to the spinal column of the dragon mentioned by the oracle. The dragon keeps its feet on the ground (symbolised by the anchors) and elevates its head into the sky (represented by the verticality of the dress). This is a naturally unstable state – both in the dress as object and in the spiritual state it represents – that has to be carefully maintained if the alignment between the child's mind and body is to be achieved and sustained.

Journeys being symbolically 'quests for knowledge ... and truth', therefore express an engrained desire for 'internal change, which the individual must undertake within him or herself. Hence, they enact 'the progress of the Soul through stages which enlarge those of its manifestation in form'. Their goal is the attainment of the 'superhuman.' (Chevalier, 1996: 556, 557). This journey is what Bailey defines as the "path of return", by means of which the individual is withdrawn from outer emphasis and begins to recognise and register those inner conscious knowledges of that which is not phenomenal ... He

discovers the Soul and then passes through the illusion of duality'. (Bailey, 1987: 27, 29).

Because of the 'superhuman' aim that journeys entail, they are in fact, from an ontological perspective, alchemical journeys. Journeys, from the perspective being considered, are transmutational, in that their aim is to bring into full spiritual illumination the flesh, ultimately purified: representing the overcoming of the delusion of duality.

Hermetic thought rests upon a model of cosmic unity. Its axiom is that of the being having once been in a state of undifferentiation and hence existing at a polarised level. (Burckhardt 1997). The being's cosmic fate is therefore the return to his or her original nature, following a 'regressive path', which enacts an 'eternal homecoming'. (Chevalier, 1996: 800). This, in a sense, is the being's ontological *fate* which, gradually purifying his or her corporeal expression, culminates in the 'body of glory'. (Corbin, 1989: 100).

5.3.2 *Desire and saudade*

Separated, the being *desires* for its counterpart. The word 'desire' has origin in augury: *de-* (away) from + *sidus*, a star and derives from the Latin word *desiderare*, meaning 'to cease to see', 'to regret the absence of', hence 'to seek'. (Partridge: 148). In this research, to yearn for the reencounter with its estranged part, therefore the undertaking of the journey towards the encounter with the lover, that is, the ontological return.

In the artwork the horn desires the star when it cannot *see* it, (i.e., before it aligns with it): *de-sidus*, away from the star. When it eventually *sees* the star, that is, *aligns* with it, their desire is fulfilled and there is no desire anymore, hence *consummatio* ensues: from the Latin '[*com-* + *summa*], to achieve, accomplish, complete, finish.' (Lewis: 179). Then, the encounter between the lovers is satisfied.

Saudade elucidates this state of separation before the consummation of the meeting. *Saudade* is an idiosyncratic Portuguese sense of nostalgia, a form of acute nostalgia, 'a vague and constant desire for something ...other than the present, a turning towards the past or towards the future; not an active discontent or poignant sadness but a ...dreaming

wistfulness.’ (Bell: 33). Katherine Vaz further explains *saudade* as ‘a yearning so intense for those who are missing, or for vanished times or places, that absence is the most profound presence in one’s life. A state of being, rather than merely a sentiment’¹³⁰.

Saudade is the emotion sung by the traditional Portuguese song, *fado*, which means ‘destiny’. Traditionally interpreted by both men and women, the latter clad in black veils, they mourn their fate. What the music suggests is usually the absence of the lover as the painful state he or she finds him or herself in and which prompts lyrical expression. *Fado* voices a resigned state and expresses the desire one has for his or her lover, always absent. The lover is both present and absent – as emotion, he or she is inside the heart, yet remains unreachable to the body. It is this paradoxical simultaneity that is so heart wrenching. And which *fado*, aptly denoting ‘destiny’, accepts as a constant ontological state: it accepts that *saudade* is *inescapable*. The feeling is stronger when the separation is long and the lovers further apart. (da Costa, 1976).

Saudade in its contemporary use has been identified as stemming either from an earlier word *suidade* or *soledade*. (The two forms are in literature used interchangeably between the 13th and 16th century (Machado: 165).). The former will be considered first.

Gomes (2003) suggests the etymology of the word *saudade* as *suidade*, a compound of the Latin prefix *sui*, reflexive pronoun of the third person, meaning ‘himself, herself, itself, themselves’. (Lewis: 825-826). *Suidade* therefore points to that which ontologically pertains to the self. The author defines the word as ‘concupiscence for the *infinite*’ and furthermore, as ‘a sentiment from a *distant past* and hope for the *distant future*.’ (Gomes: 289-290)¹³¹. These definitions clearly situate the desiring subject in an intermediary chronological place between an indeterminate past and an undefined future. The person finds him or herself therefore, in movement, that is, in *journey*, between his or her own origin and teleology.

Conversely, *saudade* is also defined as originating from the Latin *solitate*, meaning ‘isolation, solitude, loneliness’. (Machado: 165). Furthermore, in its form *solitas*, the word has the meaning of ‘unity’. (Torrinha: 841). *Soledade* has therefore the sense of unity and also deprivation of the unity, that is, a unity which has been *broken*.

¹³⁰ Available from: www.oup.co.uk/pdf/0-19-280624-6.pdf [accessed 27th March 2006].

¹³¹ My italics.

Additionally, *saudade* has roots in the word *saudar* ('to salute'), from Latin *salutatio*, meaning 'greeting, salutation', as well as 'homage'. (Machado: 165).

Whatever the origin – *suidade* or *soledade* – of the word *saudade*, and considering its complex etymology, the sense is always of a feeling of despondent nostalgia for a wholeness from which one finds oneself separated and to which one desires to be reunited. Optimistically, *saudade* can be understood as homage to ontological unity.

This sense of *saudade* is a condition Leonardo Coimbra understands as 'the remembering of the Homeland with the desire for the return to it.' (da Costa: 38). The author equates the feeling of *saudade* and the Christian concept of the coming back to the Eden from where humanity has originally been evicted. As someone who feels *saudade*, the Christian is fundamentally discontent with his or her present state because lies always in between the places of his or her perceived happiness. Both desiring subjects are *in between* states: that of paradise lost and paradise promised, the Garden of Eden, and the celestial Jerusalem. This is what Jean Delumeau defines as a 'nostalgia for the future... [which] connects with another nostalgia, that of the lost paradise... The Christian hope [is one of] rediscovering in the future the terrestrial paradise of the origins, issued from Genesis. [The believer] slithers from the nostalgia of the Garden of Eden to the hope of a new terrestrial paradise', the city of Revelation. (Delumeau: 9, 10).¹³²

The theme of *saudade* is present in the artwork as the essential ontological feeling of separation that is the generator of the movement enacted by the pieces, which desire their inner essence, Saudade for the Future, or their lover, Aveo Amor and Seal Upon Your Heart. *Saudade* is therefore the underlying sentiment that nourishes the artwork in its totality, origin of the desire of one aspect for its counterpart.

5.3.3 Eros

¹³² The arrival to the promised land is what is called 'millenarism' in the Christian tradition, 'a return to the *principal* [principle] model and a perfecting of [one's own] matrix'. (Delumeau: 9). It finds expression in the Western tradition in countless myths of salvation, often with social and political nuances, besides theological ones.

Associated with the journey, which searches for the core of the being, the quest is impelled by love. 'Love [feeds the] search for a centre which allows the dynamic synthesis of the [being's] potential.' (Chevalier, 1996: 618).

If *saudade* is the emotion that stimulates yearning for wholeness, then Eros is understood to be the energy that sets the journey of approach on course, the energy that ultimately allows the fulfilment of longing.

Orphic cosmogony

Eros (Ερως) is in Greek mythology the god of love, 'the most handsome among the immortal gods, dissolver of flesh, who overcomes the reason and purpose in the breasts of all gods and all men.' (Hesiod: 6). Although Eros has many lines of descent, narrated by distinct creational myths of which Hesiod's '*Theogony*' is one, here orphic cosmogony will be considered. It is taken from Aristophanes '*Les Oiseaux*' which, according to Clémence Ramnoux (1959) constitutes the oldest literary account, along with the Eurypides' narrative, of the so-called orphic theogonies.

"In the beginning there was Void and Night, the dark Erebe and the large Tartare. There was no Earth, no Air, nor Sky. Within Erebe's limitless core, black winged Night laid a non-fecundated Egg. Out of the Egg, Eros the desired hatched with golden wings, producing a whirlwind. Eros copulated with the Void in the depths of the large Tartare. Hence he produced the race of the small Birds. Therefore, in the beginning, there was no race of the Immortals, not before Eros made a great melange of everything. The great melange having been made, the whole thing mixed up, then the Sky, the Ocean and the Earth were born, along with the non-perishable race of the Blessed. But we, the Birds, we are the oldest of all, older than the blessed gods..." (Aristophanes *Les oiseaux*, v. 693-702, quoted in: Ramnoux 1959: 194).

In the creation myth there are two geneses: one, of Eros, the other of Ouranos (the Sky), Okéanus, (the Ocean), and Gé (the Earth). The former will be considered first.

Eros stems from shadow and stillness, appearing as moving light. Eros is ‘fecundated by nothing’ (Ramnoux: 200), he appears as an egg from within the dark (the Night) and the unnameable (the Void). From this *invisibility* light springs forth: with the birth of the god ‘*Light* flares out with golden winged Eros.’ (Ramnoux: 201).

The god is therefore the *shining son of a dark mother*. ‘A tenebrous¹³³ mother infants Eros of Light.’ (Ramnoux: 204). Worthy of note here is the rapport between the newborn golden god and the light placed within Mary’s womb that emerges as a child vibrating with the light of the divine father.¹³⁴ In both cases light, as essence of life, illuminates a shadow, associated with ‘mother’.

In the Eros case, he illuminates the Night and in doing so he ‘melanges everything’ bringing forth *manifestation* (as Sky, Ocean and Earth). Likewise in the biblical case what is produced is the materialization of divine nature in the human form, that is, rendered *visible*. And this is possible by the combined agency of antithetical light and shadow.

Eros is born of the total dark and he is the light. In the casting process, the aspect of the ensemble that gives the cast its form is the ‘darkest’ part: it is the surface of contact deep inside the mould, hence wrapped in obscurity, that will become the outward, *exposed* surface, and which will be the one covered by the gold, symbolically and iconographically associated with light.¹³⁵

Another connection between the two theogonies is the fact that in both cases the child is light and also love. Light appears associated with divine love as has been discussed before.¹³⁶ Eros has golden wings and bursts out of his egg in a ‘flare of light’ (Ramnoux: 201); elsewhere Christ twice says of himself: ‘I am the light of the world’ (Jn 8: 12, 9: 5). Eros translates directly into the Latin *Amor* and the English ‘Love’; similarly, Christ *personifies* the love of his father: ‘I ... abide in his love.’ (Jn 15: 10). Naturally this type

¹³³ ‘Tenebrous’ from Latin *tenebrae* meaning ‘shade, darkness ... akin to the [Sanskrit] *tamas* and to the [Vedic] *tamisras*, a dark night.’ (Partridge: 705).

¹³⁴ See above in this chapter, ‘The light within’.

¹³⁵ See Chapter 4 *Seal Upon Your Heart*] ‘Materials – Gold, Silk, and Glass’.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

of love is not merely human, it is celestial. Hence the rapport between gold and light in the Greek god of golden wings who, shimmering, bursts out of his shell and the iconographic representations of Christ, with a halo of reflecting gold. Of course, this metal is the prevalent material used in the artwork.

Eros is the *original* divine light stemming from the darkness. He is the *creational* light.¹³⁷

In the orphic myth the second genesis concerns the appearance of the Sky, the Ocean, and the Earth.¹³⁸ After his *mysterious* appearing from the core of the dark, and from within the cosmic egg, it is from the ‘mixing of the *tenebrae* and the *light*’ that Eros creates that which is nameable, since both the Void and the Night are essentially ineffable. (Ramnoux: 202). It is the *action* of Eros that produces manifestation: light and darkness in themselves have *no form*. This is the demiurgy of Eros – it is him binding the polarities with no form that eventually gives origin to manifestation. Likewise in the Annunciation God projects his generative light from behind (or within) the dark divine nimbus (hence unknowable) into the shadow of Mary’s womb (unseeable), which will bring about the epiphany.

Before anything definable, ‘in the beginning there was only shadow and light. The mixing of everything is, originally, a *mélange* of *Tenebrae* and Light ... their affront and their *mélange* are responsible for the delusive apparition of a universe subject to the law of coupling.’ (Ramnoux: 202). George Steiner mentions the essentially erotic essence of the Greek cosmogonies: ‘aetiology and process are, as in the psychoanalytical theory of the creative, libidinal.’ (Steiner, 2002: 29). The erotic narrative is woven by a thread of notional couples: night and light, stillness and movement, masculine and feminine.

Eros is therefore the creative light, expression of his own name, Love, which gathers in an *erotic* embrace that which is separated – *him* light, *she* shadow – and hence produces the perceivable, manifest world. It is a cosmological mystery that two things, which

¹³⁷ Notice the parallel with the light that comes from the shadow of God (the divine nimbus) and is placed within the Virgin’s womb.

¹³⁸ In referring to this second birth, Ramnoux uses the verb ‘to separate’: ‘out of the *mélange* [effected by Eros] Ouranos, Okéanos and Gé separate’. (Ramnoux: 202). This is interesting to compare with another creational myth, namely the biblical Genesis, where the notion of *separation* (*Shamaïm* into *Mi* and *Ma*) occurs and not creation *ex nihilo*.

essentially are ways of *seeing nothing* (too much light blinds as much as shadow conceals) produce the *perceivable*. But then again here we are dealing with aspects of the 'divine' inscrutability of creation.

Anteros, Imeros and Pothos

Eros has a brother, Anteros and two companions, Imeros and Pothos. (Peck, 1898).¹³⁹ Anteros is the god of reciprocal love, and Imeros and Pothos the personifications of longing and yearning. Their relevance in this research is their connection with the sense of the original ontological separation and the yearning desire for the return to that essential state of the being in relation with the eroticism of Eros.

Imeros (Ιμερος) is the name of the god who embodies the sense of 'longing or yearning after a person or thing' (Liddell: 330). Imeros comprises the word ὀρμη (*ormi*), meaning 'assault...Lat. *impetus*...a struggle or effort to reach a thing ...passion, impulse... eager desire for a thing...a start, setting out on a march'. (Liddell: 498).

Pothos (Ποθος) is the personification of 'desire for what is absent or lost, fond desire or regret, a yearning after, longing for, Lat. *desiderium*; σος ποθος a yearning after thee: love'. (Liddell: 568).

The Greek language is elucidative of the meaning of its words. Words in Greek actually denounce what they signify, they refer to the understanding and reflection of experience. Hence, Imeros and Pothos contain in the words themselves the reason for their names. This is relevant in understanding their significance to this research.

Cratylus is a platonic dialogue on the accuracy of words, a philosophical enquiry through etymological digressions. It opens with Hermogenes addressing Socrates:

'Cratylus, whom you see here, Socrates, says that everything has a right name of its own, which comes by nature, and that a name is not whatever people call a thing by agreement,

¹³⁹ These gods are mentioned in the later creational myth of Eros as the son of Aphrodite and Aires or Hermes. (Peck, 1898).

just a piece of their own voice applied to the thing, but that there is an inherent correctness in names, which is the same for all men, both Greeks and barbarians.’ (Plato, 1921).

Further down the dialogue the reason for the words here of relevance is clarified:

‘Επιθυμία [*epithemia*] (desire) ... this name was evidently given to the power ...that goes into the Soul θυμός [*thimos*]. [Επι (*epi*) ‘motion towards a point’¹⁴⁰] And θυμός [*thimos*] has its name from the raging θύσις [*thisis*] and boiling of the Soul.¹⁴¹ The name ἰμερός [*imeros*] (longing) was given to the stream ρους [*rous*] which most draws the Soul; for because it flows with a rush ἰεμενός [*iemenos*] and with a desire for things and thus draws the Soul on through the impulse of its flowing, all this power gives it the name of ἰμερός [*imeros*]. And the word ποθος [*pothos*] (yearning) signifies that it pertains not to that which is present, but to that which is elsewhere αλλοθι πού [*alothi poi*] or absent, and therefore the same feeling which is called ἰμερός [*imeros*] when its object is present, is called ποθος [*pothos*] when it is absent.’ (Plato, 1921).

Imeros hence means the urge and impulse towards that which is desired when the object of desire is nearby or approaching. It is thus the flow, the movement, the impulse of the flowing, an active force. Conversely, Pothos expresses the longing for that which is not in close proximity. Unlike his mythical friend who actively moves towards the desired thing, Pothos is tinged with sad yearning of his hazily idle nature.

Anteros (Ἀντερῶς) meaning ‘return-love, love-for-love’ (Liddell: 67) – unfortunately not discussed in *Cratylus* – as personification of mutual love, stands for the remembrance of the initial erotic inner union between the estranged parts. Pothos, by expressing yearning, represents the sentiment originated by the primary parting. It can therefore be equated with resigned *saudade*, a feeling stronger when the separation is long and the lovers are further apart. *Saudade*, when stirred up by *epithemia* (by the *action* of desire, that is, by the power that goes into the Soul which is Eros) henceforth gives origin to the yearning

¹⁴⁰ Liddell: 247.

¹⁴¹ *Thimos* θυμός stands for an aspect of the Soul *psyche*: ‘θυμός Soul, Spirit, as the principle of life, feeling and thought, esp. of strong feeling and passion ... the mind, will, purpose’ (Liddell: 323); Ψυχή (*psyche*) ‘breath, lat. *anima*, esp. as the sign of life, *life, Spirit ... the Soul of man as opposed to the body...the Soul, mind, reason, understanding*’. (Liddell: 798). Therefore *thimos* is a feature of the Soul (*psyche*), it is intentionality in the Soul, it is the Soul as shown by feelings and passions.

that arises in the breasts of the lovers in the image of Imeros, the impulse of longing. As the lovers approach, desire increases in intensity. The closest proximity prior to touch itself is the instant of greatest erotic tension. As the saying goes, in a somehow *reversed* mode, 'the darkest hour is just before dawn'. When the lovers finally touch, Imeros fulfils his role and is consummated in the *hierosgamos*.

In the artwork, from a conceptual perspective, Anteros corresponds to the essential connection between the lovers and also between the being and his intrinsic nature. Pothos and Imeros hold the emotion contained in the artwork that approaches them.

The artwork is indeed a display of reciprocal love; the star desires the horn and the horn longs for the star. Hence they continually move towards each other and regularly align. Likewise, the man and the woman reciprocally and mutually yearn for one another until their hearts and hands meet on the glass cube. Similarly, the dress 'wishes' to reveal to the world its inner formation and hence it is reversed. Pothos, *saudade* and Imeros nourish Eros as the energy that takes them all in the erotic journey towards pleasurable collision.

The whirlwind of light

Born in a whirlwind of light, Eros brings about movement and action into a reality that was dark and still. The parent ineffability mysteriously contained the seed of manifestation – an appearance that came about in the figure of the golden cyclonic god.

Eros' mother is the Night, a quiet maternal figure with dark wings, who gives birth to a likewise winged son but who has wings of light and moves as a strong wind. In Ramnoux's words, '*movement* surges forth with whirl winding Eros. In [the orphic] tradition Eros is reputed to be a stirring wind and atmospheres saturated with light, [he is essentially] a dynamic principle, a flaring force of light.' (Ramnoux: 201).

But Eros is also generative and it is in this sense that he is *erotic*. Being *moving light*, he is action that pulls antithetical things together: luminosity and shadow. According to the orphic myth, Eros is responsible for the union of the polarities of light and dark:

expressed respectively by himself and by his mother. The god, in giving origin to the Sky, the Earth and the Ocean, the second genesis in the myth, is the creator of manifestation.

Hence creation results from the great *mélange* operated by Love, who ‘separates [the] forms’ [of Ouranos, Okéanos and Gé]’ (Ramnoux: 201) and brings them into manifestation – this is a *creative* process. Eros is therefore the demiurge, creator and controller of the material world.

Referring to the symbolism of the golden god, Chevalier states: ‘[Eros] derives his symbolism from the merging of opposites ... [He] motivates all beings to express themselves in action ... [This] passage to action is only effected by contact with another individual and following on from physical, sensual or spiritual encounters... Love tends to overcome ... conflicts, to assimilate different forces and integrate them into a single structure. In this context it is symbolised by the cross, a synthesis of horizontal and vertical streams.’ (Chevalier, 1996: 618).¹⁴²

This is in accordance with the esoteric concept of Love as the second Ray of Manifestation (the ray of love-wisdom), which *moves* in the form of a spiral, and which is responsible for the coming into existence of the manifested universe. The esoteric mix of the first and third rays of creation, the vector and the circle, produce the spiral that is equated with love. (Bailey, 1991) ¹⁴³. The god with the golden wings, in the orphic theogony appears as a vortex of light – just like the luminous *spiral* of the second ray.

From an esoteric perspective ‘Love is the great principle of attraction, of desire, of magnetic pull ... [That] principle demonstrates as the attraction and the interplay between the pairs of opposites.’ (Bailey, 1991: 336).

The ray of love is, as in the case of Eros, the product of the *unseeable* father (will), and the ‘dark’ mother (matter). ‘Love in reality connotes a relation... [and] expresses the meaning of the Law of Attraction ... Spirit and matter met together, and the manifested

¹⁴² Notice here the rapport indicated above between the cross, love, and Sirius. Chapter 3 *Aveo Amor* ‘Sirius – the origin of love’; Chapter 4 *Seal Upon Your Heart* ‘Cube – anagoria from the centre of the cross’.

¹⁴³ See Chapter 3 *Aveo Amor* ‘The unicorn in alchemy and esoteric philosophy – emergence of the helical form’.

universe came into being. Love is ever productive, and the Law of Attraction is fruitful in results.' (Bailey, 1991: 287). The action of Eros brings about life manifested in matter in myriads of forms.

Eroticism as knowledge

An erotic encounter is the encounter with the 'other': as a lover or as the part of oneself one does not yet *know*. In any case the approach to the other needs to be made, either in the form of a sexual impulse, or as a *question*. It is the question that ontologically introduces the other within oneself. Physically, emotionally and also philosophically the same occurs in sexual enquiry.

In Greek the word 'eros' gives origin both to concepts related with 'love' and 'question'. The subsequent words appear in the following order in the Greek-English lexicon:

ερως - *eros*

ερωταριον (*erotarion*): a little Cupid

ερωταω (*erotao*): to ask

ερωτημα (*erotima*): a question

ερωτησις (*erotisis*): a questioning

ερωτικός (*erotikos*): of or caused by love

(Liddell: 273-274).

The word 'eros' signifying love, in the order seen here *wraps* around itself those which are related with 'question', therefore always implying a wish to know. Being Eros the energy of approaching and mixing of the polarities, 'to love' and 'to question' aim at 'to know'. *One has to be erotic in order to acquire knowledge.*

By *asking*, Eros therefore brings the *other* into the sphere of awareness of the being— that which or who is still unknown, with the aim to *integrate* it in him or herself - as lovers do. '[Two] individuals who give and surrender themselves to each other then discover themselves in each other, but raised to a higher level of being, provided that their surrender has been total'. (Chevalier, 1996: 618).

Accordingly, in the Hebraic tradition ‘the Hebrew verb “to know” is the one which Moses uses to explain the knowledge that man acquires of woman. Knowledge is marriage, the union between the knower and the known ... “knowledge is love.”’ (Souzenelle, 1995: 18). Indeed, in the biblical sense a man and a woman get to know one another by making love: ‘woman that hath *known* man by lying with him.’ (Nu 31: 17).¹⁴⁴ Likewise, from an esoteric perspective, sex is a symbol of the universal law of attraction. ‘Basically, love and sex are one and the same thing, for both express the meaning of the Law of Attraction ... [In] those two words the relation, the interplay and the union between God and His Universe, between man and God, between a man and his own Soul, and between man and woman are fully depicted.’ (Bailey, 1991: 287). According to this point of view, ‘love is not a sentiment’ (Bailey 1991: 287), it is essentially how everything in the universe comes to know the other. And this is done by the agency of love, Eros.

Hence, in myth, Eros ‘requires’ a brother and companions. The golden god is the one who makes everything move as a journey which is undertaken, but he does not represent the *emotion* – which are mutual love, longing or desire. Rather, he will *resolve* the emotions epitomised by the other three personifications.

That energy, the *dynamism* of love, is the essential *force* present in the artwork as a whole. It is that which attracts all that is separated and that erotically or ontologically yearns for its counterpart. In each object, from the idiosyncratic relation each piece enacts, to these in the place of the exhibition, to this research project as a whole.

- Eros is the crucial *movement* which the artwork as a whole performs. Hence, it is the being’s erotic impulse towards its core and the loving impulse between the lovers.
- It is the force that attracts the Earth and Sirius, and the force that spins the planet, the horn on it setting off to meet the star, which in turn expects the horn.
- It is the rotation of the square into octagon and also the ascending force from its centre.
- It is the grounding effect of the anchors and the elevating impulse of the pillows.

¹⁴⁴ My italics.

- It is the pouring and the congealing of the cast inside the mould and is also the opening of the matrix – as a *mundane* egg.
- Ultimately it is that which places the pieces in the Octagon and the latter's embracing of the pieces in its interior.
- As visible – and invisible – light in the pieces, it is present in the gold, glass and silk. As shadow, it is present in all that which cannot be seen but can be suspected, imagined, or maybe never known, for love is essentially unknowable.

The myth of Eros and Psyche, already referred to above in the text, tells how the two had been holding secret encounters. Psyche had been warned that she could never know who she was loving at night. However, overtaken by curiosity, she decided to find out. In her excited tremor, having known who her lover was, Psyche let a drop of hot oil fall from the lamplight she was holding onto Eros' naked shoulder. Revealed, the god fled.¹⁴⁵

Hence, love cannot be seen – he is *un-visible*. Only the effects of love can be seen. Love must not – or cannot – be known in his (Eros's) full magnificence. He is visible only in the marks he leaves behind. Able to be seen are only the effects of his passing. Just like touch, which in essence is love expressing *itself*.

This is enacted in Seal Upon Your Heart in the skin prints and in the casts placed on the glass cube. These are the result of Eros' action, responsible for the approaching of the bodies. Eros makes them draw close to each other. But just like the lovers, who after their encounter go on to do other things in the world, so does the winged god pass through and goes on with his activity elsewhere, making others fall in love and expressing their passion. However, the lovers will inescapably return to one another because Eros continues to have an effect on them. From the erotic encounter, what remains to be seen is the proof of their encounter in the marks left behind, which Eros is essentially responsible for.

There is a cycle of meeting followed by an inevitable *physical* separation. Enacted in the periodical alignment (that is, not constant) between the horn and the star is *saudade*,

¹⁴⁵ This is a late antiquity myth of Eros and Psyche narrated in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (iv. 28-vi. 24). (Peck, 1898).

which assures that the loving attachment remains: one ‘always returns to love’, as Piazzolla’s lyrics sing.¹⁴⁶

Besides the *un-visibility* of love itself, like the *invisibility* of God, and like the latter’s unrepresentability, Eros is non-representational. This somehow denotes his progeny, born from a non-fecundated egg laid by a dark mother: an overwhelming ineffability.

Hence the emptiness through the rings, the void through the horn’s tip, the transparency of the glass cube and also, the unseeability of the horn / star alignment. This is likewise the proof of the *fluidity* of Eros, the evidence of his paradoxical and heartbreaking *simultaneous* presence and absence, epitomised in *saudade*. These ‘holes’ as absences, across which he constantly seeps through, are like doors that he has opened and has left gaping, desiring his return. When Eros finally crosses their threshold *saudade* is fulfilled and the paradox resolved.

Similarly the dress, as it is presented standing on its pillow, is already the outcome of a process which occurred previously to its displaying: the gesture itself is *concealed*. What is therefore represented in the piece is the outcome, the result, of the action of Eros, which the piece *embodies*. The process is implicit in the resulting *total* reversal of the garment.

This concealment, the physical *nothingnesses*, are *visual* representation of the *hierosgamos* – they are places of *mystery*.

5.3.4 Hierosgamos

The *hierosgamos* is here understood to represent the outcome of the ontological journey, erotic in its essence -the fulfilment of *saudade* and its overcoming as desire, consummated by the agency of Eros.

Hierosgamos is composed of two Greek words, ‘hieros’ ἱερός and ‘gamos’ γάμος. ‘Hieros’ means ‘of or relating to the gods, [Latin] *sacer* [hence English ‘sacred’

¹⁴⁶ ‘*Vuelvo al sur, como se vuelva siempre al amor*’: ‘I return to the south, as one always returns to love’. *Vulevo al Sur* (1988), Astor Piazzolla and Fernando Salanas.

(Partridge: 579)] ... generally sacred things or rites.' 'Gamos' signifies 'a wedding, marriage: also wedlock, matrimony ... in [Latin] *nuptiae* [hence English 'nuptial' (Partridge: 369)]. (Liddell: 327, 138). The word *hierosgamos* ἱερογάμος should therefore correctly translate into 'sacred nuptials', yet it is more suitable that it is called 'union', which describes better the *unifying* character of the word. However nuptials signify marriage, which implies the union, sexual but also spiritual.

It has been seen above how there exists an esoteric correspondence between the human sexual encounter and the meeting with God. Sex is symbol of the divine marriage with the divinity. (Bailey, 1991). It is from this viewpoint that the word is used in here, this being the perspective that the artwork enacts. There is a correspondence between the dress which reveals its interior and hence symbolically represents the encounter with the nature within, that is, with the God inherent in the being (his or her intrinsic nature), and the lovers' encounter shown in the rings and likewise enacted by the horn and the star.

Sacred marriage rituals date from earliest times in recorded human history. A god would have intercourse with a sacred prostitute (the *hierodule*) and this was understood to have direct influence in the lives of the people, namely fertility.

This loving embrace was understood to have a sacred origin and aim: coincidence of opposites, universalisation of love, with the intention to establish a macrocosm-microcosm analogy. The *hierosgamos* appears as myth or rite of a sacred matrimony. (Riffard, 1987).

What was performed was a replica of the initial sexual encounter between cosmic entities, which was understood to have given origin to the earth as it exists. In some of the earliest written documents in human history exist accounts from ancient Mesopotamia of the goddess Inanna each year sexually uniting with Dumuzi, her brother or mythical king. It is believed that the ritual was physically performed. (Kramer, 1969). Then the human partners would become divinized for the length of time the ritual would take place. The yearly encounter between Isis and Osiris in ancient Egyptian mythology is another example of a sacred marriage,¹⁴⁷ as the Annunciation with divine Incarnation is also understood to be a divine marriage – the union between god and human.

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter 3 *Aveo Amor* 'Sirius – the origin of love'.



Figure 54. *Loving couple in bed, baked clay model, 11,7 cm high, Old Babylonian date, believed to have cultic relations with the marriage rites of Inanna and Dumuzi. (Black, 1992).*

From a symbolic point of view, throughout cultures ‘coitus is a repetition of the first sacred marriage, the coupling of Earth and Heaven from which all living things took their birth ... sexual intercourse is a sign of harmony, of the confluence of opposites.’ (Chevalier, 1996: 356).

The desired outcome of such rites would invariably be the production of life as continuation of life itself. As a rite the *hierosgamos* would therefore be *necessary* for life at the same time as celebrating life itself.

Alchemy, when viewed from a spiritual perspective, likewise employs sexual symbolism, given that ‘the embryo of immortality is generated by Heaven’s penetration of Earth, the marriage of [cosmic] semen [quicksilver] and sulphur, which is that of fire and water.’ (Chevalier, 1996: 357).

The alchemical sacred union is depicted in the image of the ‘chemical marriage’, the ‘central symbol in alchemy’. (Burckhardt, 1997: 149). As result of its fall from the initial ‘Adamic state’, i.e., the essential nature of humanity, where it finds itself

intrinsically divided. This division into two poles is epitomised by the corresponding complementary aspects of the human being - Sulphur as masculine, and Quicksilver as feminine. 'Man regaining his integral nature ... is the prerequisite – or from another point of view, the fruit – of union with God.' That is, his or her own ontological integrity [is] regained only 'when the two powers ... are again reconciled.' (Burckhardt, 1997: 149).

Burckhardt offers the analogy of an inverted 'T'. The vertical line of the letter stands for the divine energy coming from God and the horizontal for the polarisation of each person into masculine and feminine aspects in the Soul, symbolised by Sulphur and Quicksilver. These two, antithetical in nature (Sulphur hot and dry, and Quicksilver cold and humid) coexist in a natural state of conflict. The vertical line is both the 'relationship and the distance' between the person and God. (Burckhardt, 1997: 149). The task is to move from the periphery of the horizontal arm to the crossing point where the two branches meet and where the oppositions between God and humanity and between the human being's twofold nature are resolved.

'The two horizontal arms "measure" the development of the two polar powers of the Soul ... It can now be said that through the reconciliation or marriage of these two initially hostile forces, the opposition between 'above' and 'below' also disappears, to the extent, in fact, that the darkness is dispelled by light.' (Burckhardt, 1997: 155). This is the alchemical spiritual light and gold, that is the ultimate aim of the alchemist's journey towards illumination, the Philosopher's Stone or the *lapis vivus* (the 'living stone'). (Corbin, 1989: 208).

In one of the above quotations, Burckhardt refers to the 'fruit' – this means that a process has been enacted, that is, a journey has been undertaken, which has transformed a seed into a fruit. The latter was, from the start, contained within the former. This obviously is the transmutational alchemical quest. The dress contained inside its germ. From the point of view of construction, from the initial cloth from which its pattern has been cut, to the assembling of the distinct patterns, the thread that united them and the stitches which hold everything in its rightful place. From a philosophical perspective, those aspects correspond to the essence that would become revealed after the reversing process which turned it inside-out. The same applied to the casting process, with the mould as a kind of

seed of the cast. Considering that the journey undertaken is ontological, the achieving of the *hierosgamos* is the being's encounter with itself – a quest that transmutes things *back* into their essence.

The reconciliation of the polarities is intended to be a *practical* occurrence. 'In seeking the "conjunction of opposites" the alchemists were attempting to overturn the conventional conceptual dichotomization between Spirit and body ... Therefore, when interpreting the *hierosgamos* theme in the context of the alchemical tradition we should keep in mind that fact that it is generally meant to *include* the body; it signifies not only *idealiter* but also *realiter*.' (Voss, *The Hierosgamos Theme in the Images of the Rosarium Philosophorum*, in von Martels, 1990: 148). The initial schism gave origin to *saudade* and through the transmutational effort undertaken the entire cycle of the materialisation of the Spirit and the spiritualisation of matter has been completed. This is the full ontological circle performed.

Alchemically speaking the flesh has been illuminated by the consciousness of the Spirit and the matter has become fully purified. That is, the polarities, which find their expression in those two complementary aspects, have been resolved in the new consciousness achieved. The spiritual essence of the being has been recognised and hence brought to conscious awareness. The *hierosgamos* is therefore the alchemical ontological journey fulfilled. The dress, by illuminating its interior symbolically reveals its light within.

'From the cosmic viewpoint, [and following the hermetic tradition], single being [the primordial unity] first fragments into multiple being and love is the force that empowers the return to oneness.' (Chevalier, 1996: 618). We move from the pain that the ontological separation creates, through the loving action of Eros, finally to the resolution of the transmutational quest. This is *saudade* accomplished, the unity achieved and reencountered. The dress, which displays its illuminated interior, symbolises the core of the being finally revealed, *resolved*, the light shining on and from that place of inscrutability. This is also enacted by the precise moment of the alignment between the horn and the star and by the wedding rings placed on the anagogical place of the cube.

The *hierosgamos* depicts the esoteric alignment, the Personality aligned with the Soul and the Spirit; the *Shamaïm* finally reemerging; the arrival at the celestial Jerusalem. It is the alchemical but also Christian *Christus Resurrectus*, the achieving of the philosopher's stone. The sacred union is the crowning moment of the complete alchemical transmutation.

The artwork attempts to depict the essential disquietening of *saudade* to the crowing of the erotic encounter of the lovers – human and cosmic. The artwork as representation is a place; as ontology, it is a state. It is positioned inside an octagonal form, symbolic of the resurrection of the being. Teleologies, concealments and voids on the pieces; the transparency of the glass, the symbolic ineffability of gold: what are depicted are not nothingnesses, nor nihilisms, but mysteries.

Chapter 6: Related Artists

6.1 Andrei Tarkovsky

Andrei Tarkovsky (born Zavrazhie, Russia 1932 – died Paris, France 1986) is here considered from three main perspectives. First, from the point of view of his feature film Nostalghia (1983)¹⁴⁸, influential in bringing into awareness the theme of *saudade* in this research and unravelling the piece Aveo Amor. Second, his work will be equated with mine from the point of view of the ontological search, the essential journey enacted in the artwork and a process which the main characters in his films undergo. Thirdly, he is discussed here as inspiration for the articulation of poetic logic, the creative process underlying the production of the artwork in this thesis.¹⁴⁹

6.1.1 *Nostalghia* (1983)¹⁵⁰

The title of the film is descriptive of its theme, in that it narrates the story of the homesick pain of a man, Andrei Gorchakov. The protagonist is a Russian poet researching in Italy. During his stay in the country he encounters Eugenia, an Italian beautiful woman, who clearly desires him sexually but to whom he remains unresponsive, and Domenico, the mystic of a Tuscan spa village, who gives him the task of crossing Saint Catherine's mineral spring pool with a lit candle. Throughout the film Gorchakov has recurrent and frequent memory flashes of his wife and family back in Russia.

From my personal perspective, the first viewing of the film was altogether a *revelatory* encounter for me. It was, as Durand says of the experience of the symbol, 'stirring and

¹⁴⁸ The Italian word *nostalghia*, in English 'nostalgia' is used here as title of the film, following Tarkovsky's wish. (Johnson, 1994).

¹⁴⁹ I was initially attracted to the director's work quite a number of years ago when I first saw his film Andrei Rublev (1966/1969). However it was only during the process of developing this research that the relevance of the filmmaker's work became clear as inspirational source and resonating artistic production with my work. The main feature which has attracted me to his work was the essential Spiritual undertone evoked by his films as basis for an ontological endeavour his characters undergo. Furthermore, an underlying aesthetic quality – an intrinsic *beauty* of the images – specially in his films Andrei Rublev, Mirror (1974) and Nostalghia. Additionally, the ambivalence of plots and meanings portrayed in his cinematic sequences were also very attractive.

¹⁵⁰ Nostalghia is a feature film lasting 120 minutes. The script was co-written by Tarkovsky and Tonino Guerra, Antonioni's regular script writer. The film awarded Tarkovsky an *ex aequo* Cannes Special Prize with Bresson in 1983.

repercussive'. (Durand, 2000: 21). That which first attracted me to the film was its title. Its viewing confirms the *revelatory* character of the film. As mentioned above, it revealed the *saudade* theme in the artwork (brought it into the light of consciousness) and two scenes in it – the 'crossing of the pool scene' and the 'closing image' – suggested and clarified what later would be the piece Aveo Amor.

The word 'nostalgia' is composed of two Greek words *nostos* 'a return home or homeward; ...travel, journey' and *algos* 'pain, whether of body or mind; ... sorrow, grief, distress' (Liddell: 467, 31). Hence, a pain felt by the separation from home, which is the emotional impulse to go back to it.¹⁵¹

The concept of nostalgia has associations with the notion of *saudade*. The word 'nostalgia', as suggested by the words which compose it, implies essentially a notion of being separated from home geographically and/or emotionally. As seen above in the text, *saudade* indicates an essentially ontological condition created by feelings of separation, a condition of estrangement from the intrinsic quality of oneself.¹⁵² In both cases however, the feeling that the hiatus creates is a longing. It is this 'aching' which lies at the origin of the movement of return – be it back home or to one's fundamental nature.

Gorchakov's homesickness – in the film called nostalgia – is essentially, *saudade*. Albeit a geographical displacement (from Russia), the film suggests that Gorchakov's pain is an ontological state he finds himself in rather than merely a spatial or cultural displacement. Tarkovsky is clear about this. In the director's own words, the film is the depiction of a man 'in a state of profound alienation from the world and himself, unable to find a balance between reality and the harmony for which he longs, in a state of nostalgia provoked not only by his remoteness from his country but also by a global yearning for the wholeness of existence.' (Tarkovsky: 204-205).

Here I would like to set into perspective, parenthetically, Tarkovsky's artistic perspective and so contextualise his cinematic production. This will, at the same time, place it in correspondence with my perception on the same issues. Tarkovsky's ideological

¹⁵¹ The word 'nostalgia' has its origins in medicine. *Algia* is added to the word *nostos* when the word 'nostalgia' is devised in 1688 by the Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer to define a disease 'discovered' or diagnosed at the time. For a detailed account on the medical aspects surrounding the diagnostic of the 'affliction' (see Boym, 2001: 3-7).

¹⁵² See chapter 5 Saudade for the Future 'The Ontological Journey'.

perspective is essentially religious (Christian Russian Orthodox). He sees the artist as a martyr who suffers in order to produce the artwork, which is intended to influence the lives of his audience. Here, he is chiefly influenced by the writings of the 19th-century Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, and particularly his poem The Prophet. Tarkovsky quotes The Prophet in its entirety in Sculpting in Time (2003), a book where he expounds his aesthetic theory. However, more than being just a case of identification with the poet, the director's theories are embedded in Russian tradition, and his work can be seen as a tribute to 19th-century Russian intellectual thought, a tradition which he inherits, extends and emphasises. (Johnson, 1994). For instance, another towering influence in Tarkovsky's thought is the novelist Dostoyevsky, who will be influential in the director's concept of humanity's ontological struggle. The director recognises his cultural debt: 'I always felt it important to establish that I myself belong to a particular tradition, culture, circle of people and ideas.' (Tarkovsky: 193).

From Pushkin, Tarkovsky obtains the notion of the artist as a suffering genius embedded with a gift and a prophet in a mission of spiritual revelation to his or her public; it also posits the problem of faith (from a Christian perspective) as central in art; and the belief that an artist's chief task is to express and communicate emotions to his or her audience.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ The poem is reproduced here as illustration of the director's thought:

*Weary from hunger of Spirit
Through grim waste land I dragged my way,
And a six-winged seraph came to me
At a place where two paths crossed.
With finger-tips as light as sleep
He touched the pupils of my eyes,
And my mantic pupils opened
Like eyes of an eagle scared.
As his fingers touched my ears
They were filled with roar and clang:
And I heard the shuddering of the sky,
And angel's mountain flight,
And sea beasts moving in the deep,
And growth of valley vine.
And he pressed against my mouth,
And out he plucked my sinful tongue,
And all its guile and empty words,
And taking a wise serpent's tongue
He thrust it in my frozen mouth
With his incarnadine right hand.
And with his sword he cleft my breast,
And out he plucked my trembling heart,
And in my gaping breast he placed
A coal alive with flames.
Like a corpse I lay in the waste land,*

I do share with him the sense that the artwork is essentially the attempt at the communication of meaning to the audience, and is fundamentally intended to have an effect on the spectator (emotional, intellectual or other). I also concur with his belief that art is a means of knowledge of the self and of the world, and therefore has a function that is moral and ethical for the artist and audience alike. '[The] indisputably functional role of art lies in the idea of *knowing*.' (Tarkovsky, 2003: 36). For Tarkovsky art mirrors and reflects people's inner nature and makes them realise that part of themselves that requires being touched by art so that they come to know themselves better. They are then able to move one step further into self-knowledge.

In brief, Tarkovsky's aesthetic theory is defined from the point of view of the artist as intermediary between God and humanity. Likewise I see art as a means of contact with a sense of the transcendent. The director's words expose his views with clarity: '[The] goal for all art ... is to explain to the artist himself and to those around him what man lives for, what is the meaning of his existence. To explain to people the reason for their appearance on this planet; or if not to explain, at least to pose the question.' (Tarkovsky: 36); 'art must carry man's craving for the ideal, must be an expression of his reaching out towards it; ...art must give man hope and faith.' (Tarkovsky: 192). For him the function of art lying 'in the idea of *knowing*... [is] an instrument for [the knowledge of the world] in the course of man's journey towards what is called "absolute truth".' (Tarkovsky: 36-37).

To this Johnson posits how in Tarkovsky it is possible to find 'some of the reasons why we turn to works of art – why, as Tarkovsky puts it, we "need" them: as a means of communication [connected with the realisation of the idea of love - to give oneself selflessly] (meta-language), of knowledge (of self and of others), of understanding (of the world and our place within it), of transcendence.' (Johnson: 232).

However, I distance myself from his superlative position of the artist as a suffering, tormented genius and prophet, which '[derives] largely from a specifically Russian

*And I heard God's voice cry out:
"Arise, prophet, and see and hear,
Be charged with my will –
And go out over seas and lands
To fire men's hearts with the word."
(1826)
(quoted in Tarkovsky, 2003: 221-222.)*

tradition of awe and reverence for artistic genius'. (Johnson: 35). Rather, I see the artist as a 'normal' person who chooses to express his or her view of the world by the means of artistic production, his or her medium *par excellence*. As the philosopher, the progressive priest, the perceptive psychologist or the good teacher, the artist articulates in his or her own specific vehicle – poetry, cinema or sculpture – what is perceived of life and then imparts those thoughts on the audience. Nevertheless I share with Tarkovsky the ethical notion that the artist must necessarily be humble, honest and sincere. (Johnson, 1994).

Furthermore, if Tarkovsky's concerns are essentially religious, and are contained within the Russian Christian Orthodox faith, mine are framed by a more general spiritual context, not associated with any specific doctrine and having more to do with a general philosophical principle of identification with a notion of transcendency and aiming at the ontological encounter with it. Still, my concerns are devoid of any sense of 'sacrificial duty', so central to Tarkovsky's thought.

Understandably, given his Christian inclination and cultural influences, the director places great emphasis on suffering. All his main characters suffer from 'torment of the Soul' (Tarkovsky: 208). For him the initial separation from God constitutes the origin of 'the agonising process of human self-knowledge' (Tarkovsky: 36-37), which originates in the biblical fall: 'That was the beginning of the journey that has no end.' (Tarkovsky: 36), and life is fraught with experiencing the pain thus caused.

In the film here discussed, an aching feeling is experienced throughout, albeit indirectly, in the 'unrelieved gloom', recognised by Tarkovsky himself (Tarkovsky: 203) which is a common note played throughout. For instance, when searching for the places to shoot the film, the director found the room which would later be Gorchakov's and recognised it as the perfect setting: '[this is] a place where one could only feel very bad. There is not enough air.' (Baglivo: 1984).

For Tarkovsky this is an essential human condition, the pain that ensues the biblical fall, and the exertion to return to lost plenitude. Conversely, if struggle or ache is present in my artwork it is only in an implicit way deriving from the alchemical philosophy, which presupposes a conflicting relation between the two poles of manifestation, of which 'man' and 'woman' as lovers are symbols. Therefore, what my work tries to depict, albeit

somehow accepting the notion of an 'original separation', leans more towards the side of joy and celebration of the journey back, and the fundamental exultation in the encounter. Hence, *saudade* finds expression in my artwork in a *positive* sense: in that the emphasis is not on discomfort, but that it is the *springboard* to an eventual state of fulfilment. Nostalgia is full of shadows, mosses, ruins, breathlessness. Conversely my work is covered in gold, a material which suggests and reflects light – the revelation of the divine. In my work what is enhanced is essentially a disclosure of the optimum.

Returning to consider the film, Gorchakov cannot but suffer from an *ontological nostalgia*. His longing is not only for Russia, and his family, it is instead for a sense of spiritual wholeness.

The character finds himself deprived of something essential and necessary to his emotional, physical and spiritual survival. He experiences feelings of separation and wishes for a return to ontological wholeness. This is, in the film, shown by references to a geographical displacement – recurrent flashbacks to Russia and his family and a sense of longing for them – and feelings of inadequacy, gloom and refusal, enacted throughout. This is particularly evident in the refusal of the sensual advances of Eugenia, a character in the film symbolic of the beauties of Italy. (Johnson, 1994.) This is intended to represent his denial of sensual enjoyment and a 'preference' – even if unconscious to an extent – for a pleasure of transcendental nature.

As the film progressed I clearly recognised the unconfessed feeling brewing inside me, a feeling that was directly connected with the artwork being developed. This emotion was plainly apparent in the film: an introspective mood, a sense of yearning for something residing *elsewhere*, for something that one *desires* – as the presence of the beloved one, or that essential innerness within oneself. All these aspects started to resonate with a fundamental quality I was, in the studio, attempting to represent, even though until the viewing of the movie these remained unacknowledged. These aspects were to become identified with the overarching *emotional theme* in the artwork, the feeling that lies at the origin of the movement of approach of the lovers and of the being and his inner nature. Precisely, *saudade*.

Gorchakov is sick from his heart – and has to take pills for his condition. The heart is the emotional centre in the human body – it is therefore possible to extrapolate that his sickness stems from his estrangement, geographical and ontological. Similarly the heart, as the place of the emotional, is present in my work as the *situ* of the residing nostalgic *emotion* that impels the journey of the lovers towards each other. Likewise, the heart is that which propels Gorchakov to Russia and family – in the film these are the *symbols* of his inner nature. It is by showing his dependency on his country and familiar relationship that the film conveys his ontological estrangement. His sickness resides in his heart, a physical organ, symbol of its spiritual counterpart. It is in the heart that *saudade* beats its lament – both in the film and in my work.

Furthermore, Gorchakov wishes to return to what is *in another place*, from which he is separated but to which he is inextricably linked. This finds conceptual echoes in the notion of image and symbol used in my artwork. In both, the form is the visible part of its essence residing somewhere else.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, and also mirroring this, in the piece Aveo Amor the horn searches for Sirius, which resides elsewhere, in sidereal space.

Besides the overall theme of the film – ontological nostalgia / *saudade* – which mirrored my poetic disquietness, there were in it two sequences that proved of special significance for their generative power for the artwork: the ‘crossing of the pool’ and the ‘final image’.

6.1.2 *The origin of Aveo Amor*

The piece in the artwork suggested by the film has its origin in the crossing scene of Saint Catherine’s Pool, one of the longest uninterrupted single-takes in the history of cinema, lasting for 8 minutes, 45 seconds. This is the particular moment in the film which excited my imagination and that suggested the *principle of movement* of what would be the piece Aveo Amor. The film’s final image is also influential, suggesting for the artwork the expression of the combination of antithetical and complementary existences in one image of synthesis.

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter 2 ‘Methods and Processes’.

First I will start by describing the scene of the crossing of Saint Catherine's Pool followed by a description of the film's final image. Both sequences will be analysed from the perspective of their generative contribution and resonance to specific aspects in my artwork.

Crossing of Saint Catherine's Pool

Gorchakov is dressed in a long overcoat standing at the edge of the emptied bathing pool. Bending slightly he leans on the stony parapet and slowly swallows a pill. With a lighter he lights a candle stub¹⁵⁵ and sets off on his path aiming at the other end of the pool. It is possible to hear the splashing sounds his footsteps make walking on the bottom of the emptied pool. The wind gusts and the fragile flame flickers protected by his coat or his right hand. Carrying the candle with his left hand, two times Gorchakov sets off and two times the wind blows the candle out. He always comes back to the starting point and on the third attempt he manages to reach the other end of the pool. As he makes the crossing the effort is clear on his face. Gorchakov, reaching the end of the pool, drips some of the wax on the parapet and sets the candle vertically on it, leaving it there. The camera remains on the candle as a grunt is distinctly heard.



Figure 55. Stills from saint Catherine's Pool crossing sequence. The walk, arrival at the end of the pool, and placing of the candle on the parapet.

Final Image

Gorchakov is seated on the ground, his Russian house and tall dark trees behind him. As the camera pans back the audience is made aware that the whole landscape is actually contained inside the ruins of an Italian cathedral. Reflected on a large pool of water in

¹⁵⁵ Given to him by Domenico's character, the mystic at the village where the film is set, and who has imparted Gorchakov with the task of crossing the pool with the lit candle.

front of him is the light entering through the arches of the cathedral. Snow mixed with rain starts to fall, obliquely.

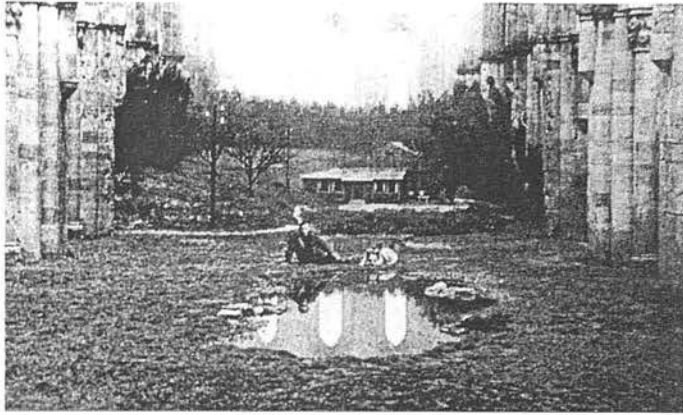


Figure 56. *'Nostalgia's final image.*

One image is dynamic, a movement being enacted in it. Conversely, the other is passive, a sort of 'live photograph'. One suggests the movement from one place to another, a journey; the other portrays a synthesis achieved. The two scenes are inextricably linked, the crossing preparing the audience for the final image.

The sequences in the film relate to my work through the notion of headway in space that the journey the *moving towards* indicates – equated with a spiritual progression – and arrival at the objective as consummation of the journey.

For the crossing, Gorchakov has to traverse the whole length of the pool with a candle; the wick must remain alight during the totality of the crossing; this is filmed in one uninterrupted take. These three instances portray the sense of wholeness of the process. This is relevant in relation to my artwork, because as principle, the latter deals with a notion of the totality of the ontological process: from an original split (undefined in time), through a journey of approaching of the estranged parts, to the merging of the integrity of the being.

In the scene being considered, it was however specifically the sense of *movement* and *journey* that were inspirational. The *forms* themselves (the horn and the star) originated from other places and associations, as has been indicated in the corresponding chapter.¹⁵⁶ The notion of *encounter* would be suggested by the final shot. I was at the time already

¹⁵⁶ See Chapter 3 *Aveo Amor* 'Foundational Image'.

dealing with issues related to aspects of the lovers' touch as the outcome of the erotic impulse. In the studio, I was making casts from people touching. It was then clear that this touch was unrepresentable in itself, and I was grappling with the notion of representing this elusiveness. The final shot offered a suggestion for an *abstracting* representation because it portrayed an impossibility in the world of phenomena. It contained in one synthetic image the merging of opposing realities: the 'real' Italy and the *anacletic* Russia¹⁵⁷. In doing so, the image proposed a move beyond the physical and the sensuous, into the realm of the surreal, *vide* Spiritual. In it, the schism was resolved in one syncretic image while still making use of perceptible *tangible* imagery.

From a diaristic perspective, I will briefly narrate the successive steps which gave origin to what would become the conceptual foundation for Aveo Amor.

The idea was – mirroring Gorchakov's action – to carry a candle through the inner side of an arch, leaving the candle's soot marking the structure's internal surface – as a trace of the *passing* of the candle. The arch seemed adequate at the time, since it contains in its form an ascending movement from the ground and its foundations, towards the sky. The uppermost part of the arch is where it locks in the keystone, its structural support and *culmination*.

¹⁵⁷ From Greek *anaklesis* meaning 'a calling on, invocation: a summoning ... a recalling'. (Liddell: 50). The word is used by Plato to refer to the recalling and invocation of the world of ideas (*Timeus*). It is used in this text for its capacity to suggest an anamnesis, which recalls the prototype, i.e., the principle. In Gorchakov's case (naturally mirroring Tarkovsky's concept) related with what Russia in reality means to him, his spiritual home.

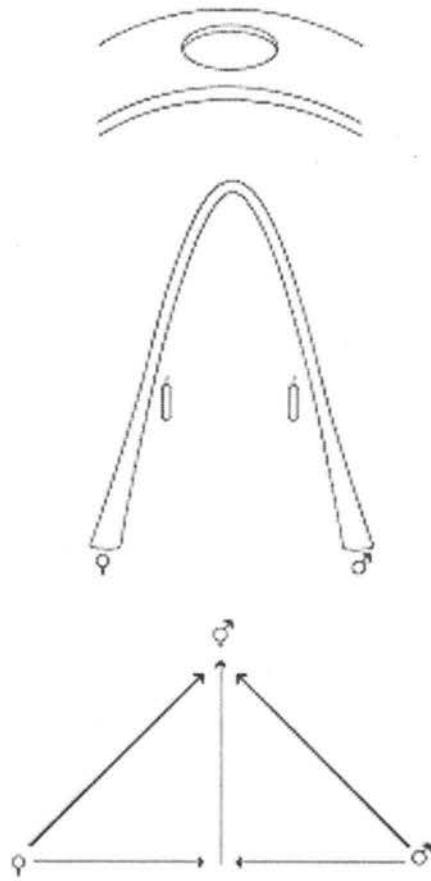


Figure 57. Concept for piece ['Arch']. Converging and ascending movement.

As pondering this idea, and by associating it with the lovers, the connection between each leg of the arch and 'man' and 'woman' became apparent. Their junction, precisely the keystone in the arch, corresponded to the erotic encounter of the lovers. Therefore, their meeting was suggested in essence by the keystone as the essential structural part of the arch, but also very importantly it was – as in the process of the arch's construction – the outcome of the process of its edification. In building an arch, first the two foundations are established, and they *journey* towards each other, until eventually they meet in *one* single entity, the keystone.

The idea for the void now seen at the tip of the horn had its origin here, where confronted with the necessity of representing this touch – unrepresentable – the idea for a hole, that is, an absence to stand for an unrepresentability, came to mind.

The intention then was to do the soot marking as a performance – precisely reflecting Gorchakov's *traversing*. According to my thinking at the time, a man and a woman would depart from the bottom of the arch, each carrying a burning candle which would leave the candle's mark and then they would meet at the apex, in the place of the absent keystone – or rather a keystone with a hole through it. Then, joining the two candle's flames, leaving the flame alive burning through the gap.

Just as in Gorchakov's action, this would be a journey towards an encounter, made perceptible in the joint flame burning through the apex, and mirror of the final shot in the film. In the artwork the man and the woman, as lovers, symbolically stand for the 'inner' and 'outer' aspects of the being, which in the case of Nostalghia stands for Gorchakov himself, his spirit and his body.

The idea for the arch was however placed aside as I embarked on the construction of the horn and a different piece started to take form.

Therefore, the notion of the journey was made conscious by the scene in the film. The implicit personal connection with it implies that the notion was already within me – the film was the catalyst for its emerging. The same applies to the influential aspects of the 'final image'.

The final shot was inspirational in that it was the vision, the making tangible, of a notion of resolution of the ontological schism. Johnson says how '[it falls] into the "reconciliation of opposites" pattern ... and can be seen as implying that [Gorchakov] has finally – if only in death – resolved his inner conflicts'. (Johnson: 160-161).¹⁵⁸ The character is shown in the last image seated on the ground, the two elements which during

¹⁵⁸ However Tarkovsky is ambivalent as to the 'real' meaning of the scene. For him, it could either suggest the insurmountable rupture within the character (that eventually obliterates and kills him) or it could signify 'his wholeness in which the Tuscan hills and the Russian countryside come together indissolubly'. (Tarkovsky: 213). In my viewing of the film I opt for the *positive* interpretation, that which suggests his regained ontological wholeness.

the film stood for his physical reality and his *anacletis* resolved in one single, meaningful and metaphorically logical entity. (Tarkovsky, 2003).

The abstractness of this encounter, of this spiritual ‘touch’, is represented in the single image through dreamlike and surreal depiction, thus appearing impossible in the phenomenological world. This clarified to me the essentially abstract, sensorial invisibility of the depiction of the resolution of the ontological schism. At the same time however, it ‘proved’ the possibility of the representation of such impossibility.

In hindsight, the scene would have two more features of connection with my artwork presented in this thesis. One aspect is the fact that it is the spiritual that is *inside* the corporeal: Russia, symbol of longing, is in the image *inside* Italy, the sensual and ‘real’. The Russian landscape is at the *heart* of the Italian architecture. In my work, likewise, the Spirit is considered to reside within perceptible form. This notion is, as seen previously, shared by the alchemical principle of the principle of life residing within form. In the artwork, for instance, the light that reveals the exterior of the *reversed* dress – which therefore illuminates its natural *interior* – is equated with the spiritual light that inhabits the being.

The other aspect is that it is the religious / spiritual aspect that *embraces* the whole physical and emotional experience – the cathedral which surrounds the earthly memory residing, in the case of Gorchakov, in Russia). Similarly, in the artwork the essential quality is a spiritual one, and it is this that which contextualises the artwork in its entirety. In my work the fundamental framework being fundamentally of spiritual and ontological significance.

Furthermore, the ‘final image’, also in retrospect, (i.e., as a *confirmation a posteriori*), suggests a further connection with my work: the vertical and inextricable rapport between the spiritual and the earthly.

In the ‘final shot’, where Gorchakov is understood to be dead (his groan at the end of the crossing and the impossibility of the synthetic the image suggesting this) the ‘above’ and the ‘lower’, the ‘outer’ and the ‘inner’ come together. At Gorchakov’s feet is a pool of water, standing ‘below’ - on the ground and even lower than the character himself, who

sits slightly raised from its edges – and which reflects the light pouring in through the arches of the cathedral, a luminosity that is coming ‘up’ from the sky.

Gorchakov’s death is the signal of his arrival at the end of his journey and indicates his arrival at the end of his ontological conflict. This hypothetical resolution in death places duality – the two worlds of Russia and Italy, sky and earth, arch and puddle, Spirit and matter, interior and exterior – in harmonious correspondence. This is done not only by the superimposed or blended images of Italy and Russia but also and perhaps above all by the light pouring in through the arches and reflecting on the surface of the water.

This light is *heavenly* because it is coming through the arches of the *cathedral*. The water in the pool, standing in its reflective horizontality, bounces the *reflection* back. This is a vertical axis of correspondence that places in direct relation, in a rapport of sameness (precisely because it is reflection) the spiritual and the phenomenological worlds.

In fact it is the arches that are seen, made visible by the light that projects them on the pool. Precisely, what is visible is not the arches themselves, but the *light* that pours in, on the ground where he is seating, that is, *made available* to Gorchakov, literally to the reach of his spiritual (in the film metaphorical) hand.

In brief, what this image suggests is that there is a correspondence between the two worlds, that this encounter can be achieved but that it is only possible outside of the world of phenomena, or in another state consciousness.

Just as in this work’s underlying philosophy, the alchemical, the celestial attribute, is reflected in and by material appearance, which at its heart contains the divine spark. Yet, to reach it, one must undergo an ‘out of this world’ experience: the alchemical journey of transmutation.

This final image is a static image, whilst the crossing scene is essentially movement. This relativises the dynamic quality of the journey with the static – vide *eternal* – quality of the Spiritual state acquired, of which death (symbolised by Gorchakov’s decease) is the

human epitome.¹⁵⁹ The image is static because its intention is to signify the essential and eternal quality of the journey accomplished. Symbolically, the image enacts fundamentally the achieving of the hierogamic state – the fulfilment of *saudade*.

In the artwork it is this anagogical, *verticalizing* movement, this resolution of the ontological nostalgic schism the pieces, as entities in themselves, fundamentally intend to perform. When the lovers meet in the golden rings, when the horn and the star align, when the dress exposes its interior, all set in the space of the octagon, they depict a hierogamy achieved. The objects are placed on square pillows and it is at the centre of the imaginary inscribed cross (in the locale of the ascending, polarised encounter symbolised by its two branches) that the objects all find their rightful place.

6.1.3 Overarching theme: the ontological journey

An overarching motif in Tarkovsky's oeuvre, is 'a journey or quest, which can be real and/or imagined, physical and/or spiritual'. (Johnson: 232). Johnson, referring to an article written by Dmitry Salynsky, posits that Tarkovsky's films fall into a 'mythological model' in which the hero undertakes a journey to another world – world beyond the realm of phenomena.

The journey here is not an individual, personal one. Rather it is a journey that is supposed to echo universally in every person's psyche or life. In myth the hero stands for the universal, that is, for the invariable aspects of the human condition. There is no 'individual', no 'person', in myth. For instance, Hercules is not a *person*, he is an archetypal figure who has the capability of corresponding, of relating, to aspects of every single person as an individual. It is from this perspective that Bailey understands Hercules' mythical journey through the signs of the Zodiac, made to correspond and to inform each of the individual journeys each person throughout history and culture undertakes from a spiritual perspective. (Bailey, 2000). In fact, the hero's journey is an event that neither begins nor ends with him or her. What is reinforced is the universality of the private experience of the mythical hero, echoed and enacted by each person alone.

¹⁵⁹ This will have bearings on the discussion of the next influential artist, James Lee Byars, for whom death precisely represented the state of perfect stability, in his case associated with eternity.

Clearly this is in accordance and further reinforces Tarkovsky's view that the artist's life transformed into art. The artist's private journey (transmuted into *mythical* proportions) has the capability of meaningful resonance with every single person in the audience. With Tarkovsky, the hero undergoes a mythical expedition that reflects personal search in a universal way. The personal sphere of experience must be presented in art in such a way that it is an expression of the universal. The challenge is to be able to find in personal experience that which resonates with human experience, how private endeavour is able to be transformed into the mirror for universal endeavour. 'Art is a meta-language, with the help of which people try to communicate with one another; to impart information about themselves and assimilate the experience of others.' (Tarkovsky: 40).

Indeed Johnson notes how the director's protagonists 'are all men seeking an understanding of self or of [their] place in a wider social, spiritual or metaphysical reality...the journey is never just an individual personal one' (Johnson: 233), but one which mirrors a universal ontological proposed reality.¹⁶⁰

In a similar manner in the case of my work, what is portrayed, albeit stemming from a personal concern, seeks to reflect something of universal character. Hence my use of alchemical philosophy, intended to convey issues of general spiritual significance.

The central plot of Tarkovsky's films is the search for the transcendent relation between humanity and God. Johnson quotes Tarkovsky's words: '[the] film dealt with a man sustained by an idea [who] searches passionately for the answer to a question and goes to the limit in his understanding of reality.'¹⁶¹

The hero embarks on a journey in search of an answer that responds to his or her fundamental question concerning his or her place in the world and his relation with God. (Johnson, 1994).

¹⁶⁰ In the case of Tarkovsky's oeuvre, the hero can stand for: his generation (Ivan in *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) and Alexei in *Mirror* (1974)); for his people (Rublev and Boriska in *Andrei Rublev* (1966/69) and Gorchakov in *Nostalghia*); or is the last hope of humanity (Kris in *Solaris* (1972), Domenico in *Nostalghia*, Alexander in *The Sacrifice* (1986)). (Johnson, 1994).

¹⁶¹ Tarkovsky is here referring to the heroes in *Andrei Rublev* and *Solaris*, but these words could well suit all main characters in the last three films he would make later, *Stalker* (1979), *Nostalghia* and *The Sacrifice*. (Johnson: 235).

As seen above, for Tarkovsky the journey is never a merely physical or sensuous one – on the contrary, it necessarily implies a spiritual process of self-knowledge. The protagonists' journeys - starting with Andrei Rublev, and spanning his whole artistic production until his final film The Sacrifice (1986) – are internal spiritual journeys, ontological operations with the aim of knowing oneself, through the experience of the encounter with others and with what life throws at him or her. The director asserts firmly: 'And with man's help the Creator comes to know himself. This process has been given the name of evolution, and it is accompanied by the agonising process of human self-knowledge. (Tarkovsky: 36-37).

Similarly, in the case of the artwork presented in this thesis, its all-embracing theme is precisely the enactment of the path towards the essence of being.¹⁶² In the artwork the journey the horn undertakes in space, the approaching movement of the lovers, the reversing of the dress, these all portray the sense of journey to the encounter with that which is desired and that which suggests an ultimate aim: the resolution of the journey, that is, the encounter with the star, the lover, the inner side of the being. This is a resolution of oppositions, or the alchemical gold.

6.1.4 Poetic logic

In Tarkovsky the methodological process used in the creation of the plot of the films is what he terms 'poetic logic'. Similarly, this is the type of method that I made use of in conceptualising the artwork.

Tarkovsky makes use of poetic logic, developed to convey the subjective, internal journey of his characters. The reason why poetic logic is more adequate for the depiction of the characters' internal subjective journeys is because it, in following their thoughts, is understood to be closer to life than the traditional 'linear' narrative in drama. He seeks to 'lay open the logic of a person's thoughts' and not 'forcing [events] into sequence into some sort of abstract order.' (Tarkovsky: 20).

¹⁶² See Chapter 5 Saudade for the Future 'The ontological journey'.

He is 'looking for a principle of montage that permits to show the subjective logic – the thought, the dream, the memory –instead of the logic of the subject... to show things which are not linked logically. It is the movement of thoughts which makes them join together inwardly'. (Johnson: 165).

The ontological searches of his protagonists are better conveyed by the possibilities that a poetic structure offers in 'lay[ing] open the logic of a person's thought' which he finds is 'much closer to life itself.' (Johnson: 165).

For the director, art emerges from lived experience. Art is not fiction: it is reality. The life of the artist provides the art of the artist.¹⁶³ Tarkovsky insisted that worthwhile art should stem directly from life. In *Tempo di Viaggio*¹⁶⁴ he says that he '[does] not like fiction as [he doesn't] like to escape life. Cinema is supposed to reflect life.' George Steiner observes in tandem with the director: 'Intuition cries out, reason makes more than plausible that there must be, that there are, functional relations between the maker and his making. How could it be otherwise? How could the form and purpose of the work not arise out of the life of the craftsman?' (Steiner, 1989: 169).

Because for Tarkovsky, art is specially made for the public and he feels the call with special ardour, it comes as no surprise that he searches for a means of communicating with the audience in the 'correct' way. This is found in the method of the inherent logic in poetry. For him '[p]oetry is an awareness of the world, a particular way of relating to reality.' (Tarkovsky: 21).¹⁶⁵ The possibilities of the method of poetic logic, 'opened up by associative linking ...allows for an affective as well as a rational appraisal.' (Tarkovsky: 20).

¹⁶³ Below is the transcription of the advice he gives to beginner filmmakers in *Tempo di Viaggio* (a 1979 documentary film preceding the film *Nostalghia*):

'[do] not separate their work, their movie, their film from the life they live. Not to make a distinction between the movie and their own life. Because a director is like any other artist: a painter, a poet, a musician. And since it is required from him to contribute his own self it is strange to me directors that take their work as a special position, given to them by destiny and simply exploit their profession. That is, they live in one way but make movies about something else. And I'd like to tell directors, especially young ones, that they should be morally responsible for what they do while making their films. Do you understand? It is the most important of all. Secondly that cinema is a very difficult and serious art. It requires sacrificing of yourself. You should belong to it, it shouldn't belong to you. Cinema uses your life, not vice-versa. Therefore I think that is the most important. You should sacrifice yourself to the art.'

¹⁶⁴ Tarkovsky's documentary film on the search for suitable shooting locations for the film *Nostalghia*. Released in 1979, prior to *Nostalghia*'s issuing.

¹⁶⁵ Tarkovsky considered himself foremost to be a poet 'I have always seen myself as a poet rather than a cinematographer.' (Tarkovsky, 2003: 221).

‘Through poetic connections, [associative connections] feeling is heightened and the spectator is made more active. He becomes participant in the *process of discovering* life.’ (Tarkovsky: 20)¹⁶⁶ It is important to keep in mind that one of the director’s objectives is the audience’s discovery of aspects of themselves through the observation and experience of the film. ‘His greatness, as Bergman recognised, was his ability to find the language through which we might “discover information” about ourselves and our truest needs, of which we might otherwise “by reason or repression or alienation remain unaware.”’ (Johnson: 242).

Tarkovsky is more interested in conveying the characters’ lived experiences rather than in intellectualising the journey. He quotes Goethe “‘the less accessible a work is to the intellect, the greater it is.’” (Tarkovsky: 47).

Reflecting this, I am interested in my work in conveying a sense for what is being presented – or *re-presented*. Hence the predominance of the symbol in the conception of my artwork and it being understood as essentially image. Although it is possible to intellectualise on the meaning of forms, movements, et cetera (through the written part of this thesis), I am primarily interested in conveying an essentially subjective, personal perception capable of echoing equivalent subjectivities in the audience. An audience which, as Tarkovsky also understands it, is co-creator of the artwork. Hence, there are, hypothetically, endless propositions for significance. ‘The final truth [in this case the meaning of the artwork] can never be known’ he admits in *Sculpting in Time* (Tarkovsky: 199). To achieve the ‘final truth’ is something which remains forever out of reach of the human, it is exclusive of the sphere of the godly and the superhuman. Final truth is therefore a teleological impossibility for human consciousness. Rather, it is made up of the infinite interpretations of each and every single member of the audience of the film.

The director understands cinema to have the potential of being the ‘most poetic, and most truthful of all art forms’ (Tarkovsky: 23). By ‘poetic’ he means enabling the associative linking of images; by ‘truthful’ he means realism and simplicity. (Johnson: 36). Truth (to life) can be conveyed by the use of real time in the film which, according to Tarkovsky, respects the rhythm of life. This is the reason behind the very long shots

¹⁶⁶ My italics.

culminating in the 8 minutes and 45 seconds of the crossing of Saint Catherine's Pool in Nostalghia.

'Film has to be factual and true communication of feelings', the director says (Tarkovsky: 23). For him image in film must possess two main characteristics: on the one hand taking its basis in everyday reality 'specific, unique, actual fact'. (Tarkovsky: 72). On the other hand the artist's own perception and presentation of this fact gives it something of a quality of a 'revelation' (Tarkovsky: 41) experienced by the audience rather than consciously understood or interpreted. It was precisely this revelatory experience that I experienced when seeing Nostalghia for the first time.

My own methodological creative process also makes use of poetic logic: a logic which is personal and that creates by verisimilitude. That is, by analogically placing together things which do not *a priori* contain issues of similarity but that are *a posteriori* found to contain points of resemblance, and therefore capable of semantic and formal connection. I create artwork through the associative linking of images and experiences. These experiences stem, as in the case of the director, directly from life, as experience, and then in culture I find specific forms and enactments which are placed together in order to lay open a subjective logic – in this case my own – which seeks to resonate with the audience's own judgement and experience of life.

It is poetic logic that allows the creation of artistically meaningful images such as the crossing scene and the final image in Nostalghia. It is the same type of reasoning that allows for the creation of the three pieces of the artwork placed within the space of the Octagon.

Furthermore, it is through the 'untangling' of the process of poetic logic that clarifies meanings behind the visibility of the forms and what they perform. That is, the same logic is used to place things together and to give origin to the artwork, reversing the process, to unlock and decode the poetic image hence created. The movement back and forward constitutes a synthesis of poetic thinking.

6.2 James Lee Byars

James Lee Byars, North-American visual artist born Detroit, USA 1932 – died Cairo, Egypt 1997.

The artist James Lee Byars is considered in this thesis from three major angles, specifically suggested by his work, which find resonance with my artwork and offer inspirational material. These are the specific way in which the teleological is conveyed, through association with the concepts of beauty and perfection, and the material use of gold; the notion of the artwork understood as image; and his framing of the artwork as an ephemeral and imperceptible action. For me, Byars embraces the underlying philosophy of the artwork presented in this thesis, from the point of view of its spiritual content.

Byars has produced a body of work which blends sculpture, installation and performance. Artistically, he stands at the crossroads of several movements: Conceptual, Pop Art, Fluxus and Minimalism. He can be considered to occupy the intersecting periphery of these movements without fitting into any one them. Kevin Power (1994) clarifies this point: ‘He fringes all that occurs from the late fifties to the early seventies ... Should we seek to classify Byars as a Conceptual artist then he fails because he imbues his objects not with phenomenology but with spirit. Should we seek to classify him as a Pop-related artist then he fails given the high-art quality of his work and his predilection for luxurious materials. And finally should we seek to classify Byars as a Fluxus-related artist ... he has no political and no art-institutional concern of any significance ... [Lastly the artist rejects the neo-positivism associated with Minimalism [which] hyperbolised the idea of the object itself and produced art as object.’ (Power: 272, 274). In an overtly idiosyncratic way, his work engages with many of the issues put forward by those artistic movements, but from a deeply personal perspective.

Of paramount importance in the formulation of his aesthetic and philosophical thinking is the influence of Zen Buddhism, to which he came in contact when in Japan, the place he said to be “‘where I belong.” “My life and paintings both seem to belong there ... where the simple essence of existence has a daily meaning.”” (Ottmann, 2004: 36). The artist also says that ‘it is only after Japan that he learns to see.’ (Power, *Gatherings: of and around James Lee Byars*, in Ramos, 1997: 47) and calls it ‘my dreamland of the

beautiful'. (Power: 281). To be precisely beauty is that which stands at the pinnacle of Byars' artistic quest.

Influenced by Eastern philosophy, his worldview becomes essentially theological rather than aesthetic: '[he sees] the highest reality as spiritual rather than physical' (Power: 280). It is precisely this belief that Byars intends to convey through his creative practice. Hence, when producing the artwork, his aim is to communicate issues of a spiritual nature and of transcendental relevance.

I initially came into contact with the artist's work in 1997 when researching for my Masters degree. I was first attracted to Byars' work by the sense of essentiality of his objects; the simplicity and harmony of his performances; the suggestion of an otherworldliness proposed specially by the latter. Without displaying a religious iconography in the traditional sense (save perhaps with the use of gold), his work nevertheless evoked a feeling of the spiritual and transcendent to which I felt drawn. This has mainly to do with his use of precious materials – gold, silk, lapis lazuli, Thassos' immaculate white marble – the beauty and 'perfection' of his sculptural forms, the wonderful stillness of his actions.

Byars' work did not, contrary to the case in *Nostalghia*, constitute a revelatory experience for me. The way it has been used as inspiration is rather as a 'parallel development'. As the artwork presented in this thesis was being constructed, occasionally I would look at images of his work and I would establish contact with his forms and the aesthetic tone emanating from it. Somehow I would let myself become imbued by the poetry of his work, allowing an essence from his imagery to infiltrate the issues I was dealing with. Silently I would attempt at entering the fundamental nature of the images and place them 'around' ideas being formed in my mind, evoking an inspirational solution for what I was attempting to do. Therefore, as inspiration, 'nothing' precisely stemmed from his work – it was more a general feel, an overall resonance that was being captured.

6.2.1 *Beauty and the Perfect*

Byars deals with the teleological in his work associated with beauty and perfection. Teleology, originating in the Greek root word *telos* signifies ‘an end accomplished: the completion or fulfilment of anything to be fulfilled ... a complete state ... the end or completion of death, i.e., death itself: so, the end or accomplishment of return ... for ever, throughout, forever, in perpetuity ... generally, any religious ceremony, a solemnity, especially of marriage.’ (Liddell: 697-698).

It will be seen how the meanings suggested by the word relate directly with the notion of aiming at beauty and perfection, epitomised in the artist’s work and aesthetic thinking. These find particular resonance in his interest in the concept of death, paramount in his thought.

Telos, as seen above, suggests the achievement of a state of perfection, because of its proposed sense of fulfilment and completion. From a spiritual perspective – alchemical or esoteric – this is man’s ontological goal. Hence, the eventual achievement of perfection is the spiritual goal of humankind.

Esoterically speaking, when the goal is reached – as alignment between the Personality and the Soul, and between the Soul and the Spirit – what is attained is ‘beauty’, an ‘inner realm’, associated with the sense of ‘truth’. (Bailey, 1995: 247).

Beauty is therefore an ontological aim and is also an eternal quality that exists (or *is*) associated with the spiritual level, as suggested by the word *telos*. As objective, it is that which humankind aspires to.

Beauty is understood to be the result of the synthesis between conflicting aspects (the manifested or changing and the spiritual or immutable). ‘The result of this harmonising activity is beauty.’ (Bailey, 1995: 92). Hence, that which is beautiful is harmonious and essentially perfect. ‘Perfect’ comes from the Latin *perfectus*, ‘finished, complete ... accomplished’. (Lewis: 598). Given Byars’ work essentially spiritual quality, it comes as no surprise his involvement with both notions: beauty and the perfect.

These are goals Byars aims at achieving, albeit knowing that they are ultimately unachievable – beauty and perfection belong to the realm of the immutable. They are

therefore not capable of being found in the manifest world. He says: 'the perfect is a vagrant word.' And also, 'I affirm the perfect because it is impossible' (Ramos: 78,107). One is constantly searching for it, and it is in this sense that his art is a teleology – as *objective*, it aims *forever*. Perfection (i.e., the teleological) is unobtainable and always remains an aspiration.

Accordingly, beauty and perfection are expressions – as projections – from the absolute, this being the 'place' where his work is understood to emanate from and hence to where it wishes to somehow return (or send the audience to). 'Byars is a ... pilgrim wandering through the universe in search of truth or of the perfect.' The perfect is Byars' name for the absolute and it is 'the ultimate form of the world itself'. (Ramos: 283).

And Byars 'loves beauty in itself. Absolute beauty'. (Power, in Ramos: 52). Engagement with beautiful things, says Diotima in Plato's dialogue *Symposium*, has the capacity of revealing 'the truth of the primordial beauty, and to 'view things ... as they are for themselves', their essential timelessness: their truth. (Heil, *The perfect moment – now and now and now and...*, in Power: 264).

In order to give the sense of the perfect and the beautiful, Byars makes use of 'perfect' forms. In the mid-seventies he started searching for form (in the Platonic sense). 'Circles, spheres and gold come closest to perfection [and] Byars opts for minimal structures'. (Yvars, *Presentation*, in Power: 262).

In order to confer the sense of the absolute, he also started to make use of expensive materials: gold, silk, immaculate marble, lapis lazuli. (Figure 58). Another strategy for the conveying of the same meaning is, from 1974, the use of the title 'perfect'. By including the word 'perfect', he immediately projected his pieces from the human into the immutability of the divine. (Figure 59).

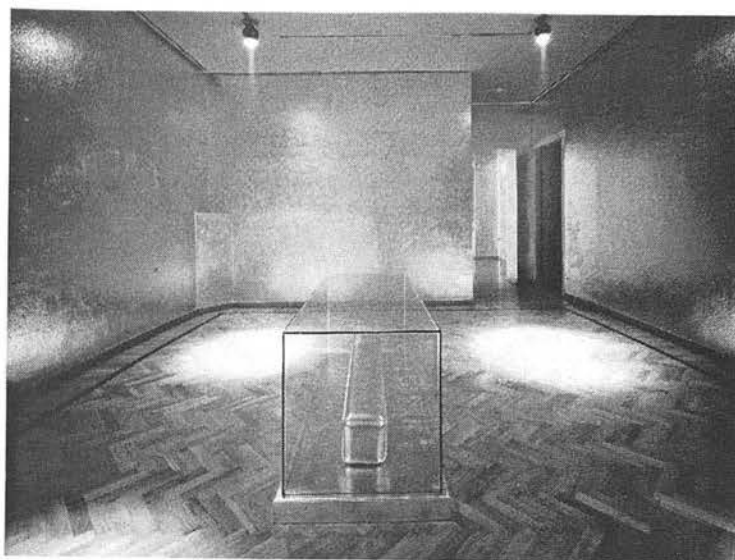


Figure 58. Installation for the 'Monument to Cleopatra' (1989) 120 x 20 x 20 cm. Cleto Polcina Gallery, Rome.

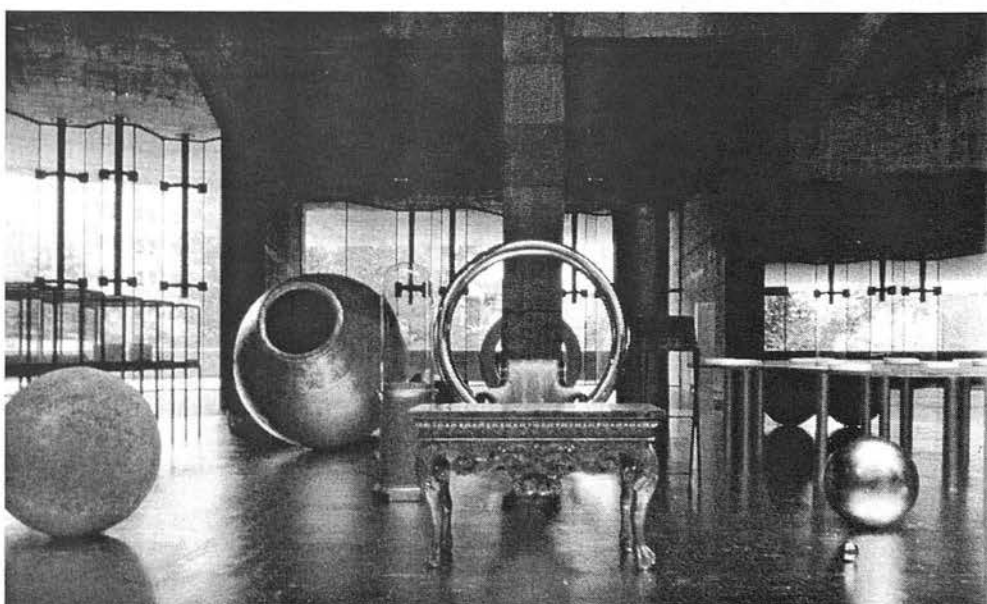


Figure 59. Installation for 'The Perfect Thought' (1990), University Art Museum, Berkeley.

The perfect love letter is the first action he performs making use of this word, (which he continued to make use of until his death; other examples including The Perfect Kiss (1975), The Perfect Performance is to Stand Still (1976), The Exhibition of the Perfect (1980), The Perfect Quiet (1984), The Perfect Thought (1990), The Perfect Love (1994), The Perfect Moment (1994/95), The Palace of Perfect (1997)). It is also from 1974 that

he starts constructing regular geometric forms, the first of which was The Golden Tower, a cylindrical structure to which he would return throughout his career.



Figure 60. The Golden Tower (1990), gilded bronze, 2000 x 250 cm, Martin Gropius-Bau, Berlin.

As Yvars writes: ‘Byars opts for minimal structures because they are capable of integrating all meanings. He goes on a ‘search for perfection’ and ‘[delves] into what is imperishable. (Yvars, in Power: 262).

In my case the artwork finds parallels with Byars’ notion of the teleological because, like him, my intention is to *aim* towards the absolute. In this sense both works are teleological in that the two aim at the notion of the perfect. The sense of the perfect form in my work is teleologically concerned with the ‘perfect’ lovers’ touch, the ‘perfect’ alignment, the ‘perfect’ reversal from a teleological perspective, that is, from a *last* perspective. Accordingly, the aim towards the end (i.e., the *telos*) of both his and my work has to do with the objective of the ultimate ontological state – he calls it beautiful and perfect, I call it *hierosgamos*. Like Byars, my work makes use of precious materials, such as gold and silk.

Conversely, however, the forms of the constructed pieces presented in the Octagon are not geometrically immaculate. My work does not aim at the ‘perfect object’ in the sense that Byars does. The horn, albeit tangentially representing a spiral, is an ‘intuitive’ form, its shape appearing as it was being constructed freehand, not following a mathematical

regular plan. Likewise the rings are not regular circles, as they retain the contours of the bodies from which they were taken.¹⁶⁷

This is a fundamental difference between his and my work, and has to do with their underlying philosophy. His Buddhism understands matter as a mere receptacle of the Spirit being therefore something which has to be transcended by the mind alone. Accordingly, Byars makes the body *disappear*. Hence, his forms do not carry the presence of the human body, they are mathematical geometric structures.

Also, when performing his actions, from 1974 on, he invariably appears blindfolded, suggesting the withdrawal of the person who performs. (Weinhart, *The artist with the mask: Self-representation and performative presence in the work of James Lee Byars*, in Ottmann). Conversely, my work opts for putting the person and the personal touch at the centre of the work: the 'intuitive' spiral (hence personal and unique), the lovers' (own) skin, the dress made for and used by a specific person. In accordance with his philosophy, the artist's clothing appears as uniform (as the word indicates, 'one form'): his appearing in golden lamé suits, for instance. For example, amongst others, in The Magic Wand (1975), The Poet of the Gondola (1986), Introduction of the Sages of the Alps (1984), an untitled performance standing on top of a sphere immersed in water (1989) – all of which he performed blindfold. When performing with others, such as in The Play of Death (1976) (Figure 61), everyone is dressed equally – back suits and white vests, with Byars totally clad in black, his presence at the central window virtually unnoticeable.

¹⁶⁷ The exception to this is naturally the glass cube.



Figure 61. *The Play of Death* (1976), performance, Hotel Dom, Cologne. At the stroke of noon Byars and twelve others step forward into the balconies of the hotel's first floor. The artist is totally dressed in black. The twelve other people, all of whom work in some relationship with death, have their faces uncovered and their shirts are white. A soft rain is falling. Upon their appearing at the windows, in simultaneous, they all uttered the syllable 'th': common in the Greek *thanatos* and English *death*. After pronouncing the syllable, they step back at the same time into the darkened interior of the building.

Instead, I make use of an alchemical philosophy, which understands the body as an *inherent* part of the process of ascending towards the spiritual. In here the body is a vehicle for the manifestation of the Spirit within and is therefore understood as that integral, intrinsic aspect of the human that has to be dealt with. Hence the concept of the 'spiritualization of the flesh' as symbolised by the image of the *Christus Resurrectus* (Figure 15 and 16) – the tomb is empty, signifying the body made Spirit and not the body shed and neglected.

As discussed above, Byars' version of beauty and the perfect suggests the sense of the ulterior, of the essence and the immutable because of the *harmonious* quality implied by them. The artist's use of gold and the referencing of death are associated with these meanings.

Gold was a material of choice for Byars. He used it widely and lavishly, usually to cover other materials. These include amongst others, plaster *The Gold Sphere* (1992) (seen in

Figure 59 on the right), marble The Monument to Cleopatra (1989) (Figure 58), terracotta The Spinning Oracle of Delphi (1986) (seen in Figure 59 on the left), brass Is (1988) and The Golden Tower (1990/2004) (Figure 60).

Gold contains the sense of beauty and perfection.¹⁶⁸ The precious non-perishable metal is iconographically and symbolically associated with the celestial attributes of divine light and the divine vow: marriage is indexed by the two golden bands on the ring fingers of the wedded couple ‘in the eyes of God’. As seen above, the word *telos* contains the meaning of the wedding ceremony; and harmony implies placed together in marriage, to marry (*armoxos*). Gold is therefore fitting to celebrate the teleology as harmony, beauty and perfection of the joining of things, be it of two lovers or an idea and its representation in form.

Byars’ major concern is the projection of matter – and hence of the spectator – towards the transcendental. In this aspect his work and mine converge, in that in both what is intended to be portrayed is spiritualization and the object as understood as image.¹⁶⁹ This aspect has bearings on my discussion of Byars’ understanding of the artwork as image, below.

We see the same concerns with beauty, perfection and eternity in Andrei Tarkovsky’s work. The director’s vocabulary, when speaking about art, includes words and expressions such as ‘beauty’, ‘transcendence’, ‘spiritual vision’, ‘perfect’ and ‘absolute truth’. (Tarkovsky: 36-56). Furthermore, the title of chapter two in his book is precisely called ‘Art – a yearning for the ideal’. He shares with Byars a similar concern for death, as a state of perfection, or where perfection can be established. As seen in the corresponding text, in the final shot of Nostalgia, Gorchakov’s death signifies the resolution in one image – synthetic, eternal, and hence *perfect*– of the oppositions ontological and ‘real’.

For both artists, what is at stake is a notion of the fulfilment of the *telos*. This word also means ‘the innermost, Latin *intimus*’ (Liddell: 276). The teleological being the fulfilment of an aim, therefore suggests that the aim is of the most *intimate* nature, as the Latin word indicates. ‘Intimate’ here stands for innermost being – hence the realm of spiritual

¹⁶⁸ See Chapter 4 Seal Upon Your Heart ‘Materials – Gold, Silk, and Glass’.

¹⁶⁹ See Ibid for discussion of the use of gold in my work.

essence – but also that which teleologically, because existing ‘in perpetuity’, is divine. This is found in Byars in his aspiration to depict beauty and perfection, and in Tarkovsky in the invariable pattern of resolution of ontological conflict depicted in his films. (Johnson, 1994).

These issues find resonance in my work. In it, the notion of the teleological is present in that it deals with the concept of aims and with the notion of ends, which becomes a teleological concern. The pieces in the octagonal room aim to portray final, *perfect* encounters: the erotic touch itself, the alignment, the resurrection, the *hierosgamos*.

In my work, eternity is likewise a concept assessed through the *hierosgamos* and the universal character of the spiritual endeavour which, as in Byars, aims at the encounter with the eternal and the perfect.

Byars’ aesthetic disquietude is concerned with the presentation of the immutable and the ideal. His interest in the notion of death, in him associated with the permanent (Power, 1994) – hence of the sphere of the ultimate and prototypical – is paramount.

‘Gold is deathless and imperishable.’ (Power, in Ramos: 61). Hence adequately represents death itself. ‘The figure of death ... [runs] through... Byars’ entire oeuvre, both in the titles of his works ... in the motif implicit in his “perfection”’ (Weinhart, in Ottmann: 128) and also in the selection of gold as overarching material.

As in Byars, death stands for an image of eternity. In the case of my work, eternity is conversely present not in death but in resurrection. I propose a *dynamic* death: the resurrection, ‘eternal’ and ‘perfect’ itself because prototypical – an immutability.

Resurrection is, from a symbolic perspective, eternal and immutable because it belongs to the sphere of the superhuman and hence the heavenly. ‘[It] is the clearest symbol of divine manifestation, since all traditions hold that the secret of life can belong to God alone.’ (Chevalier, 1996: 798). Hence I’m interested in the manifestation, in the *reality* or appearing (or appearance) of it.

Death and resurrection are linked, in that the former necessarily precedes the latter. Resurrection necessarily implies death, but death does not necessarily imply resurrection.

The latter is a vertical ascending, i.e., an *anagogy*, and the former a horizontal dissolution, associated with that which is earthbound. In alchemy the 'black phase' of the work is precisely the putrefaction, inside the *athanor*, of the material nature (of the alchemist). In this sense death can be understood as being the 'gate of life', (*'mors janua vitae* "death is the gate of life"' (Chevalier, 1996: 278)), since that which resurrects has inevitably died before. In the alchemical process the black phase precedes the spiritually higher white and red stages, the red phase corresponding to the achieving of the Philosopher's Stone. Therefore, if death is the gateway to life, then the resurrection is the new life, the 'divine manifestation', the invisible made visible, the unrepresentable become representable. Which, in counterpoint with death, is essentially dynamic, changeable.

Therefore, it is possible to extrapolate that while Byars' meditations on death perhaps remain on the level of the black phase (epitomised in his performance The Play of Death (1976), where he is indistinguishable from the black background ¹⁷⁰), my work aspires to the white and red phases of the alchemical process.

The dynamic (or alchemically speaking, transmutational) aspect of the resurrection is present in the continuous rotation of the square (associated with the earthbound) into the octagon and successively into the square, again into the octagonal shape.

In one of his actions, The Death of James Lee Byars (Brussels 1994), he covered the interior of a *quadrangular* room in the gallery entirely in gold leaf. (Figure 62) The artist lay down on the golden floor, dressed in a golden suit, thus merging with the room.¹⁷¹ He therefore places his own body in a state of 'perfect death', or 'eternal death' (that is, eternal in the body but also in the Spirit) suggested by the gold, the merging with the room, and the absolute quietness of his body.

¹⁷⁰ See Figure 46's legend for details on The Play of Death.

¹⁷¹ Other performances under the same title were performed, albeit with variations, such as the inclusion of five diamonds (in fact Swarovsky crystals) to represent the human body and also in Venice, where the 'diamonds' were replaced by five drops of water. (Ottmann: 45).

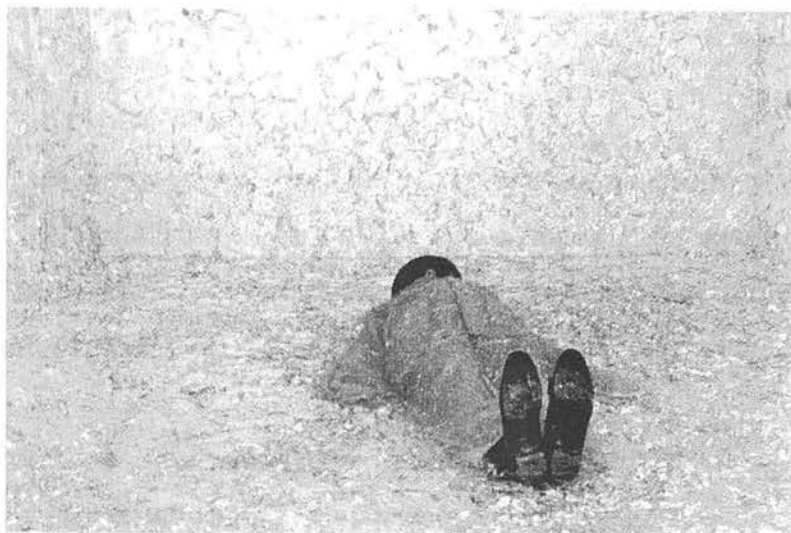


Figure 62. *The Death of James Lee Byars* (1994), performance, Galerie Marie-Puck Broodthaers, Brussels.

Whereas Byars presents a *static* figure – he is kept immutable – I am interested in *change*. The horn continuously moves, and the world is seen moving *through* the opening of the rings: day and night, the light and the shadow, the sun and the clouds, the changing seasons, these can all be seen through the rings which are set in gold. *Seal Upon Your Heart* presents a *dynamic* touch set in *immutability* (hence the gold), yet calling forth the change and accepting it wholeheartedly. This is the result of the amorous encounter. Elizabeth Grosz, quoting Alphonse Lingis writes: ‘erotic movements keep nothing in place’. (Lingis, A.. (1985), *Libido: the French Existential Theories*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, quoted in Grosz: 286).

6.2.2 Image

Byars’ ‘philosophical proposition’ is the question. ‘Byars feels that questions energise life, that they generate transformative energy, and that a question means change.’ (Power: 284,285). Here Power finds parallels between the artist and Plotinus, for whom Byars felt ‘an attachment’ (Power: 286). For the philosopher ‘revealed truths’ were more significant than ‘natural truths’, once the former ‘directed [the] attention away from the outer world to the inner self.’ (Power: 286). What is at stake here is the Keatsian understanding of poetic transcendence, suggested by artistic questioning being akin to a spiritual ascent. Predictably, given Byars’ Zen Buddhist philosophical substratum, his

question is aimed at issues of transcendental, spiritual nature – precisely the finding of the self within.

The question – asking questions – naturally proposes the search for an answer. In this respect, it can then be equated with the journey portrayed in my work, and also in the ontological quest of Tarkovsky's characters. These, as in the case of Byars contain and diffuse, a 'transformative energy' – precisely the ontological *alchemical* transmutation.

This means that Byars – as the Russian director and as in the case of my artwork – embarks on a journey, which he identifies as a questioning, since 'if we do not ask questions we are standing still.' (Power: 284). Quest(ioning), of course, implies movement at least of the mind.

Questioning gives *provisory* answers. As Tarkovsky says, 'the final truth can never be [humanly] known' (Tarkovsky: 199). It remains out of the reach of the human, and is only accessible as divine consciousness.

This provisory answer, again as in Tarkovsky's case, is the image (as object or performance in the plastic arts) – a possible representation or a sensuous approximation to the notional, unrepresentable in itself. The image is a provisional answer to the 'unanswerable' ontological query and cannot be definite or final in itself. This is the reason why Byars reuses time and again the same forms, shapes and materials. Because every time they are re-presented, they add to their intrinsic (ideal) meaning, inexhaustible *ad infinitum*. Each object or performance, as individuated entity, is a 'small part' of the totality: the smallest part represents the whole, this being an aspect of Byars' Zen Buddhism. (Power:1994).

Gold plays a fundamental role in identifying the artwork as image: Ottmann (2004) quotes Sachito, who recollects that for Byars 'gold meant primarily "light"' (Ottman: 47) – divine, perfect light, yet made visible to human eyes. This is the reason why the objects themselves (geometrically perfect: sphere, circle, parallelepiped, or cylinder), by being covered in gold, hence *embody* the perfect light. Yet as *objects* they are not – cannot be – perfect due to their materiality. From a physical point of view, they are projections,

emanations from the ideal, from the perfect. The same reasoning is applicable in the case of my work, where gold is the overarching material used.

In his piece The Book of 100 Perfects (1985) (Figure 63), the deep, dark velvet of the four sofas blend into the dark background, 'threatening to sink', along with the black cubic book placed in their centre. Only the sofa's feet are clearly visible, due to them being covered in gold leaf. The golden feet in fact stops the display from plummeting into the dark. By using gold, 'he dramatises the dissolution of the material, physical objects, in light ... releasing gravity from the earth and causing it to float, becoming light.' (Michely, *The present perfect of painting*, in Ottmann:138).

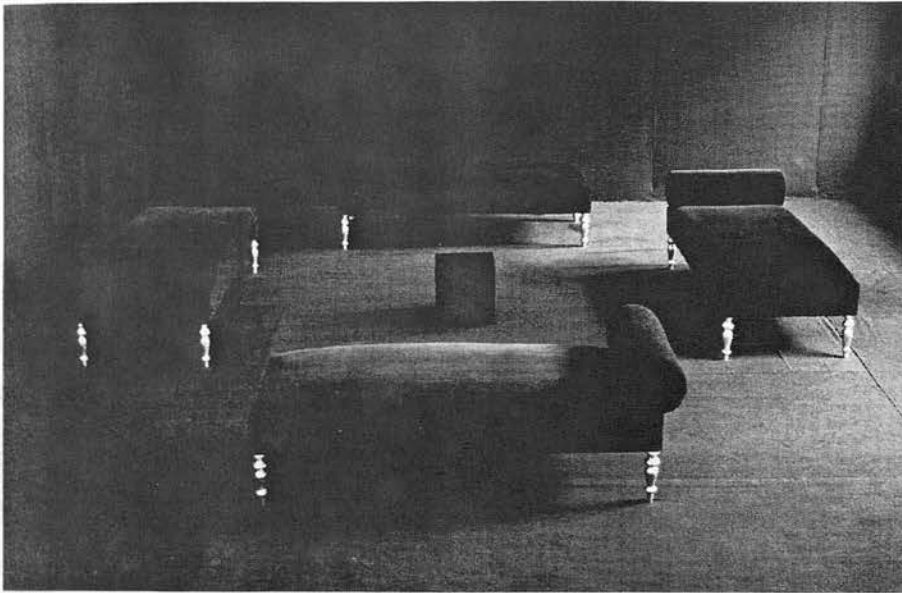


Figure 63. The Book of 100 Perfects (1985), book 35 x 35 x 35 cm, sofas 67 x 182 x 75 cm, Mary Boone Gallery, New York.

In Nostalgia, as we have seen, the ideal is represented by the physical impossibility of its final image. Tarkovsky is peremptory in his understanding of image: it appears as 'a revelation ... [a] *sui generis* detector of the absolute ... through the image is sustained an awareness of the infinite, the spiritual within matter, the limitless given form'. (Tarkovsky: 37).

Hence this is the image's natural and inescapable condition: to be the presentation in the phenomenological of the noumenon or ideal. The notion of image designates the unification of two aspects, of that which is presented *here* and that which resides

elsewhere, as sensuously perceptible intersection. As such, it is *harmony* (and also beauty), precisely because it is *the joint* between both realities: of the source and the source's projection in the manifest world.¹⁷²

'Harmony' means the balance between the parts. It comes from the Greek *armonia* 'joining, concord fitting together, a union between parts'. Its root is the word *armos* meaning 'a joining, a joint.' This word is also the root for the word *armoxo*, 'to put together, to marry'. (Liddell:103). Therefore harmony is, further than the action of joining, the *joint* itself, the latter being that which is the binding element *common* to the two poles. The notion of image precisely indicates the joining of two aspects: it is the *joint* itself – of that which is presented *in here* and that which lies *elsewhere*. The image is therefore, harmonious, *perfect*.

For his performances, Byars invariably appeared blindfolded, suggesting (besides the withdrawal of the subject) that the vision required is internal, *vide* spiritual. Also denouncing that what is really worthy of being seen is not accessible through the physical eye, but the inner eye alone. That organ of transcendental vision, which sees into the immaterial, into the noumenon, into the place of the prototypical where *the* answer resides. Precisely inner vision is often associated with physical blindness. An example is the Theban Tiresias, the blind seer, the most famous soothsayer of ancient Greece, who revealed to Oedipus his crime, of whom during the war against the Seven, the Thebans sought counsel, on whose body shadow, after his death, Odysseus sought advice, or even who told Narcissus' mother of his son impending fortune.

The image, as reflection of the ideal (seen with the physical eyes) but also as gate into it (seen with the inner eye), is therefore essentially undecipherable. It merely suggests and indicates – as an oracle does. And this is why it is an answer as proposition, or the provisional answer.

Hence we can appreciate the image's evocative power. Returning to Tarkovsky once more, an image can only be successfully understood 'on an emotional or even supra-emotional level ... [Its suggestive power resides in its] mystery', which it transports

¹⁷² See Chapter 2 'Methods and Processes' for discussion of image.

within (Tarkovsky: 40). The image ‘cannot be intellectualized’ (Ibid) if and when that happens, it loses its force and its poetic, redolent capacity.

My work is understood to be a set of images; in each piece alone, idiosyncratically enacting a concept, and also in the artwork as a whole: Aveo Amor, Seal Upon Your Heart and Saudade for the Future in the space of the Octagon. These three pieces within the eight-sided room are images created by the movement of *saudade*, of return to the lover and to the Self. An image addresses the meta-sensory vision of the audience.

6.2.3 *Artwork as immaterial, ephemeral, unnoticeable action*

If Byars’ objects are concrete, dense, objectively *present*, aiming at the perfect and therefore at the absolute, conversely his performances, being *actions* and framed by the same teleological philosophy, require that they are as *immaterial* as possible.

His performative works seek to ‘dematerialise art through actions and performances’. (Ottmann: 30). In them we are struck by a staggering precision – echoing that of his objects. Every detail is carefully planned, nothing being left to chance or the fortuitous. Byars calls these performances ‘actions’. (Ramos: 238).

These did not necessarily require the presence of an ‘art’ audience or even an audience at all. They were, in fact, *invisible* but for the fact of their *occurrence*. Ottmann quotes Byars’ invitation for a 5 a.m. performance, in front of Kyoto’s Imperial Palace (date unknown), which the invitee, Lindley Hubbell did not attend, ‘[refusing] to get up so early’. Later, the artist told Hubbell: “‘It was quite nice. It was witnessed by a policeman and a dog”.’ (Ottmann: 33). Another instance was when the artist stood in the middle of the Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco (1973). An unexpected storm ensued and none of his invites appeared. The only who ‘witnessed’ it was a Chinese family accidentally caught in the blizzard, ‘who lay down every time there [was] a strong gust’. (Ramos: 231). Often he did not have the actions documented, and if they were, it was ‘almost by chance’ (Weinhart, in Ottmann: 125) because a member of the audience – when present! – would photograph or video it.

That is, the actuality of their happening is enough. Just like the instance of the alignment between the horn and the star, even though this might not be perceivable, the fact that they do align, is sufficient for the underlying meaning to be enacted.

Byars rejects the notion of art purely as object, as material manifestation. His actions 'tend to symbolise their own momentary and intangible occurrence. They are brief, brief enough to question their own existence. They are poetic in the sense that they deal with a breath, a kiss, a poetic phrase, or a single repeated word.' (Power: 274).

In all cases of Byars' near or completely invisible performances, the audience would lose the work if they were not totally engaged with the instant and totally aware of *everything* that was happening – that was very little, on the surface, yet every detail significant. They were, as Power wrote, 'the materialisation of an emotion that cannot be expressed.' (Power: 282). As in my work, what is at stake in Byars is the attempt at expressing the essentiality of a fundamentally unrepresentable emotion. This is particularly relevant in my piece Seal Upon Your Heart, which endeavours to represent the feeling of touch. The notion of the 'preciousness' of the instant in particular finds poetic echoes with the moment of the alignment of the horn and the star and of the physical touch of the lovers.

Byars' performances contain two notable aspects: on the one hand they are actions – he does (performs) things. On the other, they are immaterial and even unnoticeable. He waves his hand and arm in the air and hence he writes a love letter. (Figure 64); the movement appears and disappears as in an illusion; he presses together his lips in the air and that is a kiss; he appears and immediately disappears. All these contain and confer the sense of the ethereal, of dissolving, of disappearing immediately after completion – an almost perfect material immateriality.



Figure 64. *The Perfect Love Letter Is I write I Love You Backwards in The Air* (1974), performance, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels. Byars, wearing a white suit, blindfolded with a black cloth, stands in front of Brussels' Palais des Beaux Arts, Belgium, drawing imaginary signs with his hand. He writes backwards 'I love you'.

It is the *immateriality of the action* and its almost non-noticeability that precisely pushes it out of the realm of the concrete – an action is something which carries with it the notion of a fact ('to act', as deed or action translates into Latin as *factum*, hence the word 'factual', which contains that which is real and actual (Lewis: 313)), something which does happen in the *real* world. Yet, we might ask of Byars' actions – do they really happen? Were they not an illusion, a mirage? The artist's performances are almost not there, and do not leave a trace of their occurrence. They are merely what Carl Heinlein calls 'shimmering traces of memory' (Weinhart, in Ottmann: 125).¹⁷³

A love letter 'written' in the air, only by the moving of the hand leaves no record – it is barely recognizable as having happened. The action is therefore projected *towards* (aims at – as Eros does with his arrow) the non-real, the not-of-this-world.

In Byars, all action is reduced to a minimum – as in the symbol, the minimum is used to stand for the maximum. The symbol is a synthetic representation (a minimum) that aims at enlarging the imagination so that it can reach the maximum of meaning and hence reveal beauty, perfection – and truth, as Diotima says in *Symposium*.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Haenlein, C. (1978) 'The Epitaph of Con.Art Is Which Questions Have Disappeared?', in James lee Byars: The Epitaph of Con Art Is Which Questions Have Disappeared?, exh. cat. Bern: Kunsthalle Bern: unpaginated.

¹⁷⁴ See Chapter 2 'Methods and Processes'.

Likewise, in my work, the pieces are also minimal in the sense that they are reduced to essential forms and enact simple principles. But which, as with Byars, tend towards the suggestion of a teleological maximum.

In the artist's case, this minimum is also ephemeral – the sound uttered is one syllable of a word: *th*. Similarly, in the case of Aveo Amor the alignment is ephemeral – the horn and the star meet in an instant and immediately they move apart. The alignment occurs in one single instant – everything keeps on moving (the earth and even the star), they cannot be arrested. As soon as the exact second of the alignment passes it is gone, easy to miss. Likewise in Byars, as soon as the hand finishes waving 'I love you' the instant of the reality of the declaration is gone. Similarly, the casting of the rings (albeit set in gold 'eternity') happened in a moment, an instant of touch, which was transient. The instant is visible, is made physical because it was arrested in materials which are able to keep their form. But in the case of Aveo Amor the same is not true. There is no possible material seizure for their alignment.

Byars' work contains the unnoticeable and the implicit. In my artwork presented in the Octagon these notions are likewise present. The action of reversing the dress is *implicit* in the presentation of the dress *already reversed*. This also finds resonance in the *abstract* quality of the alignment in that it portrays an abstract touch. For Byars too, the action is made as unnoticeable as possible so as to release it towards the essence. In my work, the unutterable and ineffable is contained and expressed by touch *itself*.

In his performances, Byars uses his own body. Conversely in my work, it is the pieces themselves which perform the actions. In Byars' case, the human body is concretely present – although it is reduced to a minimum in that uniforms are used and by being blindfolded he removes the element in the human body that gives entry into the person itself. In the case of my work, the body, when present (Seal Upon Your Heart and Saudade for the Future) is implicit or has moved away and has only left the proof of its passage by the effects it has produced (Seal Upon Your Heart), or because the dress was made for that specific body (Saudade for the Future).

Both the work of Byars and myself however aim at the same *telos*: the projection towards the immaterial and the transcendent.

James Lee Byars once wrote: 'The only death that matters is your own.' The day he died, May 23rd 1997, a full moon was hovering over Cairo's night. A perfect circle in the sky.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This is a practice-led research project with the focus of the research being conducted by my practice as a visual artist.

The research project comprises three objects placed in the octagonal room at Gosford House, East Lothian, Scotland - itself constructed in precise geographical alignment with the Royal Mile in the city of Edinburgh. The artwork within its architectural context was the tool through which I have conducted the research. A sense of interrelation, co-dependency and mutual conference of meaning between place and object is at the origin of the practice and has also served as a tool for the preceding analysis.

The main subject pursued and developed in the production of the artwork, and which has suggested and led the reasoning considered throughout the previous pages, has been the exploration through sculptural enquiry of the being's ontological journey, understood as a spiritual process of self discovery – or of the finding of Self.

The way this issue was developed was by means of the production of three objects, which enact and depict two stages and a principle contained in that journey. These are respectively, the being's search for its counterpart or origin; the arrival at the objective, here considered as achieving an ontological *hierosgamos*; and the necessary revelation of the intrinsic nature of the being that the quest entails. The features of the journey are conceptually coloured by the symbolic significance of the octagon, which suggests the transmutational qualities affected by the ontological quest.

The essential emotion contained in the artwork is *saudade*, a nostalgic feeling, the outcome of an initial ontological schism, and which is a melancholy yearning for the totality of existence. It is this feeling that which prompts the journey of a return to wholeness. Running in parallel, the energy that is understood to impel the quest and eventually be responsible for bringing about the *hierosgamos* – the teleological encounter of the being with itself and of the lovers, in this research symbol of the former – is Eros. The ontological search is therefore an erotic journey of attraction and interplay of polarities, with its aim being the fulfilment of the nostalgic feeling. Hence the title of this

research: '*saudade* or the erotic journeying back to oneself'. *Saudade* is the emotion, the wish to return to the lover and to the ontological integrity. The journey is energised by the erotic attraction – the force of Eros – the lovers feel for one another and each ontological polarity (body and Spirit) experiences for its counterpart.

The poetic and conceptual enquiry has been made through the creation of pieces which intend to portray and enact each phase and principles of the erotic process as described. The artwork in its totality constitutes evocative depictions of the themes. As such, the artwork in its entirety and each piece individually is a visualisation, a proposed image of the notions here considered. That is to say, as image, the artwork is the phenomenological expression of the notions which are understood to emanate from a conceptual, notional sphere and of which it is a proposed reflection.

Each object placed in the architectural context fundamentally suggests one of each of the stages of the quest, albeit still finding conceptual or formal points of contact with the others. This was somehow unavoidable – and in fact desired – given the common thematic enquiry that runs throughout. The relevant links were identified during the text. Nevertheless, each piece corresponds to a 'solution' or suggestion for each one of the stages and principles of the overall theme of the journey. Hence each individual object constitutes the resolving of a specific subsidiary issue of the overarching theme of the research. In their ensemble and placed in the octagonal environment, they constitute an image of the main subject.

The piece Aveo Amor deals fundamentally with the notion of the ontological search. It consists of a gilded helical form, here identified as 'horn'. It is placed at a 27° angle aligning with Sirius on the 17th of August 2006 at the culmination of the star, at 09.40 hours. The horn and its support, a 'plane table' (*tabula praetoriana*), stand on a square white silk pillow measuring 3 metres. On the pillow is marked the alignment of the horn with the rise of the star at 04.49hours on that day. The pillow is placed in the precise middle point of the octagonal room, thus in alignment with Edinburgh Castle and the Royal Mile.

This piece poetically enacts the quest of the being for its ontological complement. It fundamentally depicts the horn's search for its counterpart and origin, the star Sirius,

source of the principle of love in the solar system, and of the energies responsible for the human spiritual alignment or enlightenment. These qualities are found to be present in the horn itself. This is suggested specifically by its form, the helix, found to be image of the resolution of the individual's ontological polarities, body and Spirit. Furthermore, the helix was also found to be the shape that light creates in its movement through space. This analogically further relates the horn with the star, source of cosmic light, in that the horn, through its form, consequently becomes a 'congealed' ray of light. Therefore the horn, poetically understood to share its nature with the star, carried by the earth's spinning in space, looks for the celestial body as its source and complement. When the two align it is poetically understood that a ray of love and energies of 'at-one-ment' are channelled to earth. This piece therefore proposes a sense of active influence on the planet. It intends to perform a 'magical' procedure. The fact of the horn being covered in gold suggests the unutterable quality of the ontological encounter, affected by the alignment.

Seal Upon Your Heart is an object which depicts the consummation of the ontological quest. It presents gold-plated silver cast rings of the fingers of two lovers. These fit exactly one inside the other, and are placed on a crystal cube with skin imprints of the chests of the partners on two of its faces. The cube and the casts are placed on top of a square red silk pillow measuring 32 centimetres. The whole ensemble rests on top of a 'plane table' and is placed set against the middle of the main window of the Octagon, thus in alignment with the Castle and the Royal Mile.

This object is an artistic expression suggesting the ontological hierogamy of the being with itself, the lovers here as symbol of the being and its Spirit. It portrays two personalised wedding rings, due to the registration in the cast of the ring finger's skin of both people. This finger has been found to connect directly with the heart, by means of the *vena amoris*. The same digit has also been found to connect with the liver, the storing place of the hierogamised (spiritualised) energies in the body. The two rings are placed at the centre of the cube's imaginary inscribed cross – the intersecting of its two branches – the geometric and symbolic place of the anagogy (i.e., the Spiritualising) of the erotic encounter. The emptiness seen through the rings suggests the released state that the erotic encounter produces – it is an image of the hierogamy, which is undepictable. The fact

that the rings are covered in gold suggests the eminently celestial and unrepresentational character of the encounter. They therefore represent the materialisation of the ineffable.

Saudade for the Future suggests above all the issue of the revelation of the spiritual interior the ontological journey entails. It is essentially an appropriated object. It consists of a red felt dress, turned inside-out standing on a square white silk pillow measuring 60 centimetres placed directly on the floor. The dress was made for me when I was three years of age.

The action of turning the dress inside-out exposes its reverse side. This exposes its intrinsic, usually concealed aspect, to which its exterior (its usually visible part) is inextricably connected. The action of reversing the dress hence suggests the making visible, i.e. making manifest, the intrinsic nature of the being, its Spirit. The dress is understood to represent the human body. By performing the reversing action it is poetically understood that the spiritual essence – the divine light – residing within the formal aspect (that which gives the body its material shape) is revealed and hence made visible. The gilded buttons on the dress, which display anchors, structurally keep the dress upright. This symbolically suggests the binding (as indivisible rapport) of the two natures: these are the celestial or divine (embodied by the gold, here representative of the Spirit within) and the earthly (epitomised by the dress itself).

The ensemble is placed in an octagonal room, which is geometrically a rotated square. This shape, by its symbolical significance, confers a sense of resurrection – i.e. transmutation – to the three pieces placed into it. It suggests the notion of the spiritualization of matter and the materialisation of the Spirit, that is, the hypostatic union, fundament of the alchemical cosmology.

Gold is the fundamental material used in the pieces. This is because of its symbolic capacity for representing the anagogical movement. It also suggests the representational ineffability of the erotic touch and of the *hierosgamos* – two teleologies, both of which are of an ineffable nature. Hence the metal stands for the alchemist's achieved spiritual gold (his or her ontological hierogamy), which is the outcome of the alchemical transmutational process.

Silk is also a prominent material used in the artwork (all pillows are made out of the substance) for its natural and also symbolic association with the notion of transmutation and resurrection.

Furthermore the overarching presence of the quadrangle – as square, as cube, as octagon (as rotated square) and the inscribed cross – relates to the anagogical notion, to the energy of love responsible for the spiritualization of the flesh, and to the essential transmutational quality that the ontological journey entails. Hence all pieces are placed on top of square silk pillows and the place chosen to contextualise the ensemble is an octagon.

The main sculptural technique employed in the making of the artwork has been the casting process. The horn was cast from a carved plaster model and the rings were likewise cast from the fingers of two lovers. There is therefore in this project a predominance of the notion of touch, which has naturally become a conceptual issue accordingly discussed in the text.

The casting process, being a haptic procedure, creates by touch. Touch – as erotic contact – is the aim of the lover's journey to each other. This is mirrored by the notion of spiritual realisation, which is the aim of the being's encounter with its spiritual essence.

Physical contact creates a shadow, and the body, an 'opaque' entity (hence embodiment of obscurity), searches for its light within. Therefore notions around the shadow as place of generation and the creative capacities of the merging of light and shadow have been considered, both in what concerns the casting process, the erotic encounter and the ontological fulfilment.

The casting process reverses the mould into the cast. The cast has been poetically considered in this research as a mould whose intimacy, *vide* intrinsic nature, has been exposed. This has found resonance specifically with the notion of reversing the dress, which like the mould, as a turned inside-out cast, reveals its intimacy. That is, the most hidden (the deeper contours of the mould) becomes the most exposed (the proudest shapes of the cast). Poetically, the Spirit reveals itself in the casting process and this is mirrored in the reversing of the dress. The Spirit is in this research understood to reside

within the body of the being, and seen as indivisible from his material, phenomenological appearance.

This work aims to innovate essentially via idiosyncratic poetic construction, as well as through blending geometric form with the human in one single object.

This work is a poetic proposition resting upon, and being influenced by, an idiosyncratic blending of personal interests, perspectives, experiences, and rationales. The work places these in relation to issues stemming from different aspects of culture, namely notions borrowed from the alchemical, esoteric, biblical and mythical traditions, having as a result images of poetic nature.

Formally the work presents itself as a merging between the geometrical and the human. The geometrical is associated with issues of the ideal and the perfect – hence the teleological – whereas the human evokes notions coupled with diversity, change, mutability, and even the unexpected.

By fusing in *one* object the two realms, the piece synthesises in *itself* the two. The object is therefore neither only the ideal, nor merely the mutable or the varied.

Therefore, the rings as circumferences are not geometrically perfect, albeit tending towards that perfection. Furthermore they contain the individual person: the skin's cast (on the rings themselves) and the skin's imprint (on the glass cube). Similarly, the helix even though pointing towards the ideal helical form, is the result of an 'intuitive' carving, i.e., done freehand and spontaneously. Likewise, the pillows are in effect squares, but due to their padding and the weight of the objects placed upon them lose their geometry.

Consequently, what is conceptually at stake is the setting of the perishable and the changing into the eternal and the ideal. The human is set into immutability by being, on the one hand united with the perfect or teleological, on the other, by being made unchangeable by being fixed into permanent materials.

In this sense the pieces mirror the concept of image. They are the resolution in *one* object of the *intersecting* place of the permanent (the prototype) and the material occurrence.

Each piece stands at the formal and conceptual tergiversation of the noumenal and the phenomenological. The first suggested by the use of *tendentially* perfect forms, the latter indicated by the presence of the human body and activity.

These considerations have naturally suggested the fundamental poetic enquiry that was expounded throughout the dissertation and which lies at the origin of the artwork and determines both its appearing and appearance.

The way in which this research contributes to the general creative endeavour is the type of source and the idiosyncratic personal blend and thinking which produces the artwork as object and as concept. This amalgamation brings into concreteness a work which, as it is presented in this research, did not exist previous to its creation. The artwork in its entirety is hence a product and enactment of a personal vision.

What is new in reality, is the specific poetry created and the thought that underlines and creates it. But also and perhaps fundamentally the suggestion of the fusion in the object of the divine and the human as described above.

As an artist, that is, from a personal perspective, there were two fundamental issues which I have understood through the course of developing this research. On a processual level, that the practice precedes the interpretation and the analysis. As the Latin locution puts it, *primum vivere deinde philosophari*: 'first live then philosophise'. Naturally in the case of the artistic creation 'to live' equates with 'to make the artwork', and 'philosophise' with comment and elucidation. In fact, only after the artwork was fully devised and completed could the written aspect of the project unfold.

The second aspect that this project clarified was, from a cosmological perspective, that knowledge is already within oneself. I felt that I 'knew' already everything that I needed to know in order to *create* the artwork – that somehow the knowledge was already within me. Culture offered a guideline when I needed inspiration, felt lost, or when I required a sense of corroboration.

Indeed, one of the basic premises of the thinking enacted in this research is that of the 'God within', understood progressively to manifest itself during the disclosing of lived

experience. Art – the process of making and viewing – can function as a means to aid this awakening and this understanding. It can suggest to the artist and to audience alike that life is a process of gradual summoning of the essence.

In principle, this is the reason why the artwork presented and discussed in this thesis is about light, specifically the light within. Access to this essence is done by means of the conscious, active use of the power of love. It is this energy that is necessary to contact and express in order to fully seize meanings of personal and also universal relevance.

The grasping of these significances can bring about a sense of a deeper understanding of oneself and hence of reality. The moment and the quality of the *revelation* however belongs to the realm of mystery, the unspeakable and the unutterable. The mystery itself is not representable – only its effects can be. Art, understood as a projection from the ineffable, and consequently considered as a phenomenological effect of the activity of ‘The Inexpressible’, can function as a representation of the mystery.

In this thesis the artwork is the search for the internal light, a quest enabled and affected by love. Put simply, I have presented gold – the immutable metal – in a room – a resurrectional place.

The lover changes into what he loves,
by virtue of much imagining;
I have therefore nothing left to wish for,
For within me I carry that which I desire.

If into that my Soul is transformed, what goal
remains to be desired by flesh and bone?
Only in whom I love can my body find rest,
there being no other bond for my Soul.

But now this demigoddess, fair and pure,
as an outward feature of her slave,
with my Soul establishes her norm,

exists in my thought as pure idea:
and the pure and living love that I am and possess,
like inner substance labours towards form.

Luís de Camões

Lisboa, 1524 – Lisboa, 1580.

Appendix A: Sirius – rise and culmination on the 17th August 2006

The date chosen for the alignment of the horn with Sirius is the 17th of August, the day of the helical rising of the star for the city of Edinburgh in the year 2006.¹⁷⁵

The geographical coordinates are latitude 55° 59' 52'' North, longitude 2° 52' 33'' West.¹⁷⁶

Sirius has a declination of -16°43'25''.¹⁷⁷

Two alignments for this day have been chosen: the rise of the star and its culmination. The alignment of the horn with the rise of the star is marked on the pillow on the floor; the alignment of the horn with its culmination is indicated by the direction and angle of the tip of the horn.

In astronomy, the helical rising of a celestial body is the first day in the year in which it rises in the eastern horizon just before sunrise, so that its brilliance in the sky can be seen for a few moments until the sun outshines it.

The culmination of a celestial body is the highest point it reaches during its trajectory in the celestial vault. This is both an annual and a daily occurrence. The star or body culminates every day while it is visible in the sky (every day it rises and sets reaching a daily maximum altitude), and it has one day in its annual movement in which it appears higher in the horizon. In this work it is the culmination on the day of the helical rising that is being considered.

¹⁷⁵ The date of the helical rising changes slightly every year. The results below produced by astronomy software *Sky Charts/ Cartes du Ciel* (Chevalley, 2004).

¹⁷⁶ The latitude and longitude measurements of a point on the earth's surface are given in polar coordinates. These specify a point on earth quite precisely. Celestial positions are specified in 'right ascension' and 'declination'. Right ascension is measured clockwise around the north pole when looking up (which would be counterclockwise looking down on the northern hemisphere of the earth). The official starting point of right ascension is where the ecliptic (apparent path of the sun) crosses the celestial equator on the vernal equinox (first day of spring). Declination of stars are given in positive or negative degrees, which correspond exactly to latitudes on the earth, positive being above the equator, and negative, below. For instance, the north star, Polaris, has a declination of almost 90°. (Karttunen, 2003).

¹⁷⁷ This angle, measured between the earth's equator and Sirius and which remains constant, has been the angle chosen to cut the 'root' of the horn. This introduces in the object itself a direct – and intrinsic – connection with the star.

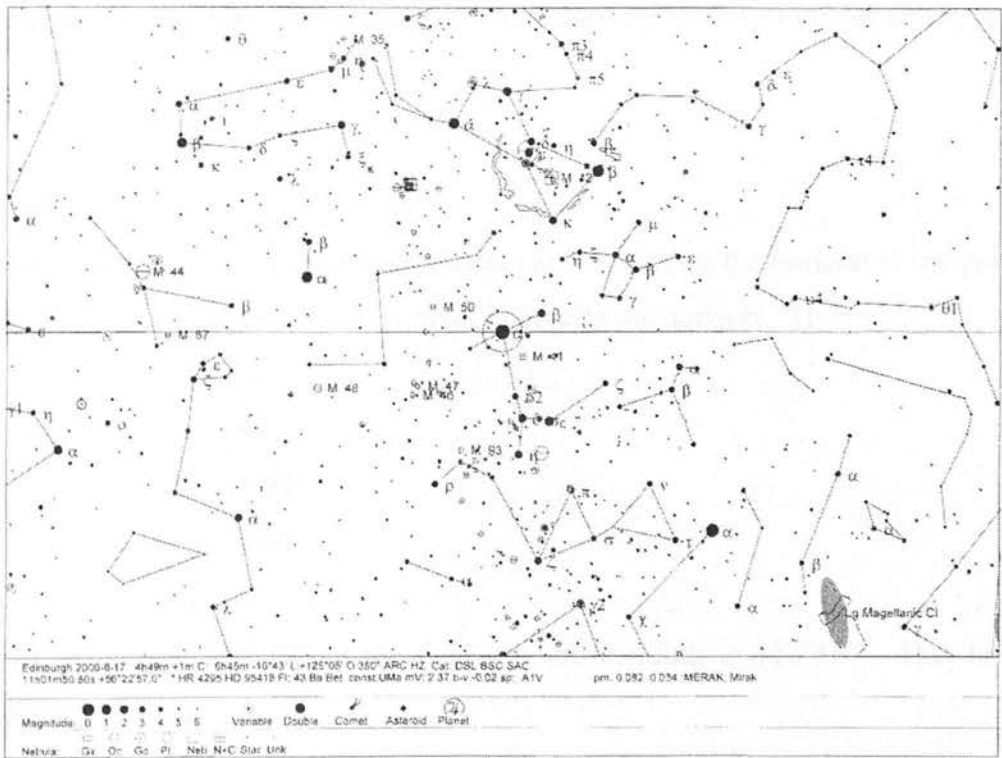
To establish the above alignments, the relationship between two coordinates at the desired moments (for the rise and the culmination of the star) has to be calculated: its altitude, i.e., its relation to the horizon, and its azimuth i.e., its angle with North.

On the 17th of August 2006 the sun and Sirius rise closer together in time and Sirius is already visible. The helical rising of Sirius occurs at an altitude of -7° that is, it occurs when the sun is at an altitude of 7° below the horizon. The horizon marks 0° of altitude and the angles being dealt with for the determination of the altitude here are measured between the sun and the horizon. For instance, when Sirius is at 6° below the horizon (that is, -6°) it would not be visible because the sun's light would outshine it.

Sunrise on the 17th of August 2006 is at 05.37hours.

Altitude:

Sirius's rise on this day is at 04.49hours. (Figure 65) Then the altitude is 0° because this is the moment when the star is on the horizon. Sirius culminates on this day at 09.40hours at an altitude of $27^{\circ}06'$. (Figure 66).



For its culmination at 09.40hours (which is quite low on the horizon) the angle of the azimuth is $180^{\circ}24'$. That is, practically South.¹⁷⁸

Calculations for the setting of the horn

Sirius culminates on the day of the helical rising at 09.40hours with altitude $27^{\circ}06'$:

$$\sin 27^{\circ 179} = 0.45$$

$5 \times 4.5 = 2.27$ metres high – the point of the horn will be raised by this height.¹⁸⁰

Thus:

For rise of the star, marked on the pillow:

Azimuth $113^{\circ}55'$

For the star's culmination, the horn's tip pointing:

Azimuth $180^{\circ}24'$

Altitude 27°

Tip raised at 2.27m high

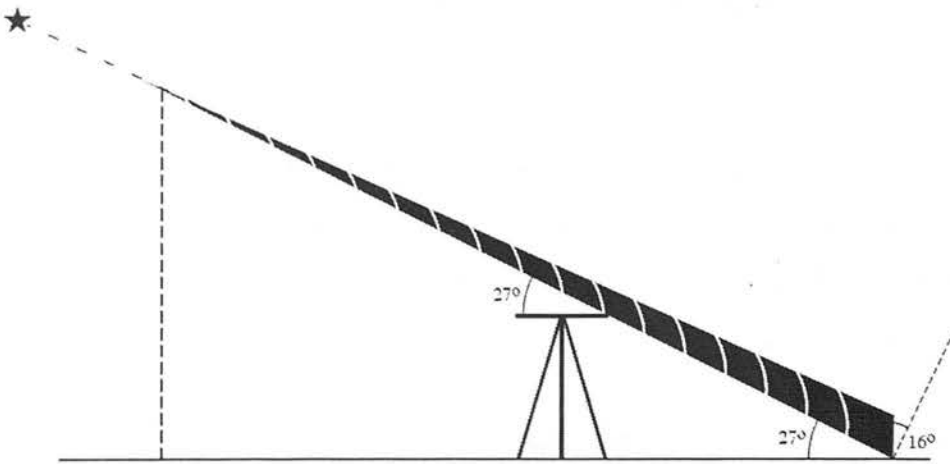


Figure 67. Alignment between the horn and Sirius with 16° angle cut at the horn's tip.

¹⁷⁸ The set of Sirius for that day is at 14h30m. The angle of the azimuth is $246^{\circ}05'$ with altitude 0° .

¹⁷⁹ The fraction $06'$ is negligible and has therefore been rounded up.

¹⁸⁰ For Sirius' rise on the day of its helical rising at 4h49m: $\sin 7^{\circ} = 0.12$ metres high. This would be the height chosen if the horn itself was to be set to align with the star at its rising. Because the moment chosen is the star's culmination, then only the azimuth's angle will be represented at the rise of the star, marked on the pillow.

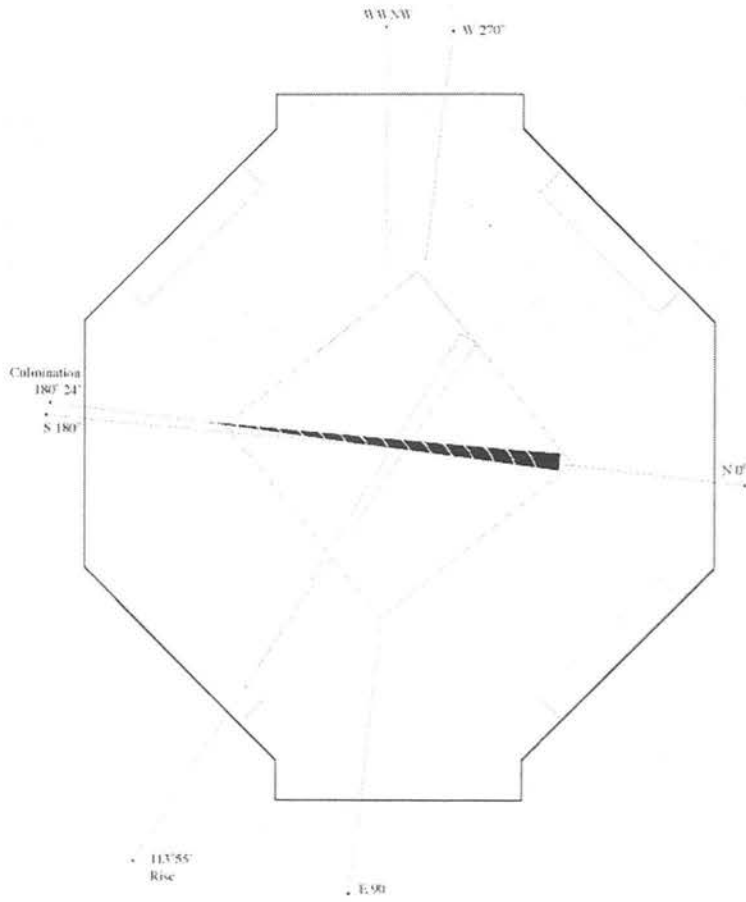


Figure 68. Setting of the horn in the Octagon with geographical coordinates.

The horn rests on a plane table, or *mensula praetoriana*, (Figure 69) a surveying instrument to plot the planimetric outline of a tract of land simultaneously with the surveying operation. It is named after its inventor, Johann Richter Praetorius (1537-1616).

The plane table is a sort of tripod upon which a flat surface slots in, in order to place the topographical measuring instruments which will align with a desired geographical feature. It is thus made to be transportable. Being designed to be carried around, its use as support for the horn relates to the mobile quality of the horn itself, which in practice can be set to align with Sirius from any place on earth, but also because the table is used as support for instruments which *align* with geographical features.



Figure 69. Plane Table in use.

Appendix B: Light's movement

Modern science, which studies the nature of phenomenon, that is, of that which is manifested, contributes to corroborating the meaning of the form of the helix. It can even be said to corroborate the teleology of human evolution as suggested by alchemical and esoteric philosophy.

The helix is a form that light can create in its propagation through space and is arrested in the essential, foundational form for life. Thus, in the form of the helix resides the revealed essence of that form. Light is interchangeable with matter ($E=mc^2$). It keeps its essence expressed in form. This is why symbology, the study of the meaning lying behind form, is so appropriate to the enquiry being done in this thesis. Symbology, by considering the form itself, shifts the focus of its attention from the substance-form side of existence and becomes aware of that which has been the source of form-production on any specific level, be it science or any other area of knowledge.¹⁸¹

Movement of light's propagation

The following is taken from: Alonso (1992) and Jackson (1998).

In physics the region in which a particle with an electric charge experiences a force is called the electromagnetic field. The electromagnetic force is one of the fundamental forms of interaction of nature¹⁸². The elementary particle that mediates the electromagnetic force is the photon, which is the fundamental particle of light (both visible and non-visible, depending on its frequency of vibration). Electromagnetic waves consist of oscillating electric and magnetic fields travelling together through space at the speed of nearly 300,000 km per second (in a vacuum). This is a universal constant of nature denoted by c . It is this quantity that establishes the relation between energy and matter in Einstein's celebrated formulation, $E=mc^2$. The (unlimited) range of possible wavelengths and frequencies of electromagnetic waves makes up the electromagnetic spectrum, including radio waves, infra-red radiation, ultraviolet radiation, x-rays, gamma rays and visible light. Light is nothing but propagating electromagnetic waves in the

¹⁸¹ This is the aim and the process followed by the esotericist and therefore by the alchemist.

¹⁸² The other three being gravity, the strong nuclear force and the weak nuclear force.

visible range. Thus the velocity and type of propagation properties of the electromagnetic waves is the same as that of light.

The explanation that ensues is on plane-propagating waves and is based upon Maxwell's equations for the electromagnetic field, which imply that the electric and magnetic fields satisfy a wave equation.

Maxwell's equations for the electromagnetic field in a region free of charges and currents, i.e., in a vacuum, admit an electric field E and a magnetic field B . These are perpendicular to each other and vary only along a direction which is perpendicular to both of them.

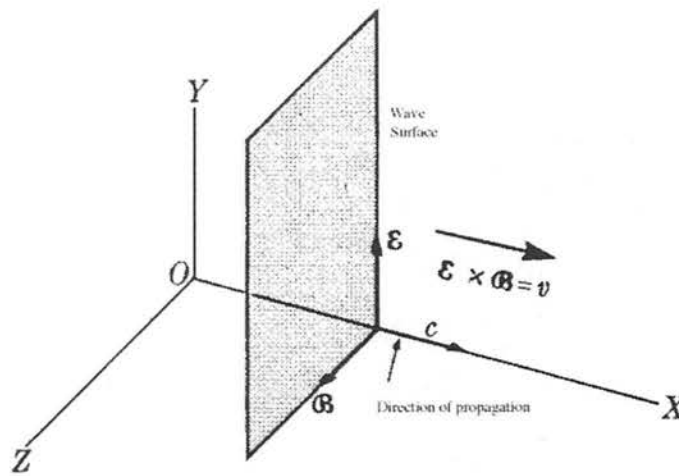


Figure 70. Orientation of the electric and magnetic fields relative to the direction of propagation of a plane electromagnetic wave.

Maxwell's equations for the electromagnetic field admit as a solution an electric field E and a magnetic field B perpendicular to each other, oscillating in time with fixed direction. Assuming E and B propagate along the X -axis, the electric field oscillates on the XY plane and the magnetic field on the XZ -plane. Light satisfying these properties is usually said to display planar polarization. The result of this action is what is called a plane electromagnetic wave. These waves are transverse, with the E and B fields perpendicular both to each other and to the direction of propagation of the waves.' (Alonso, 1992: 784).

Electromagnetic waves can propagate in a variety of modes

(plane, spherical, cylindrical) depending on the nature and geometry of their source. Nevertheless, at large distances from the emitting object, a portion of a cylindrical or a spherical wave (which at a closer distance does not present the characteristic orthogonality between B and E found in planar polarization) can be considered as practically plane and thus the principles for plane wave propagation are valid. This applies to the light arriving from distant stars and other astronomical objects. In this case the electric and magnetic fields are also perpendicular to each other and to the direction of propagation. As with plane waves, the direction of propagation coincides with the direction of the vector $E \times B$.

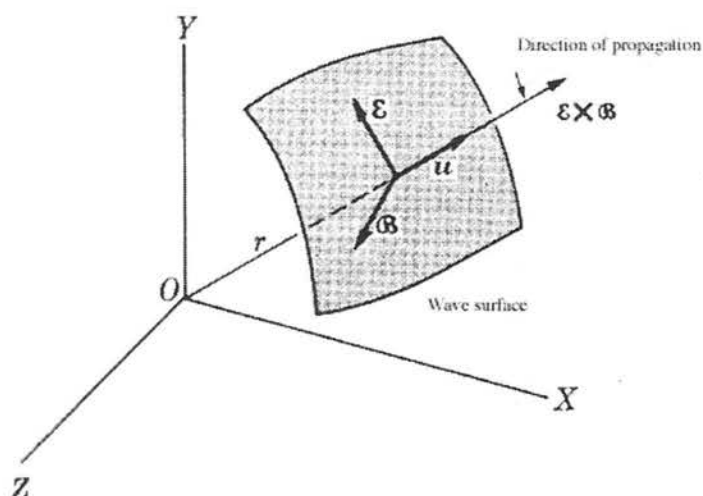


Figure 71. Spherical electromagnetic wave at a large distance from the source.

Other types of polarization are allowed by Maxwell's equations (for instance linear and non-polarized). Of particular interest to us is the case of circular polarization, when the electric and magnetic fields in fixed points in space rotate around a circle. When we consider the propagation of a circularly polarized wave, we see that E and B trace a spiral around the $E \times B$. ($= V$) direction.

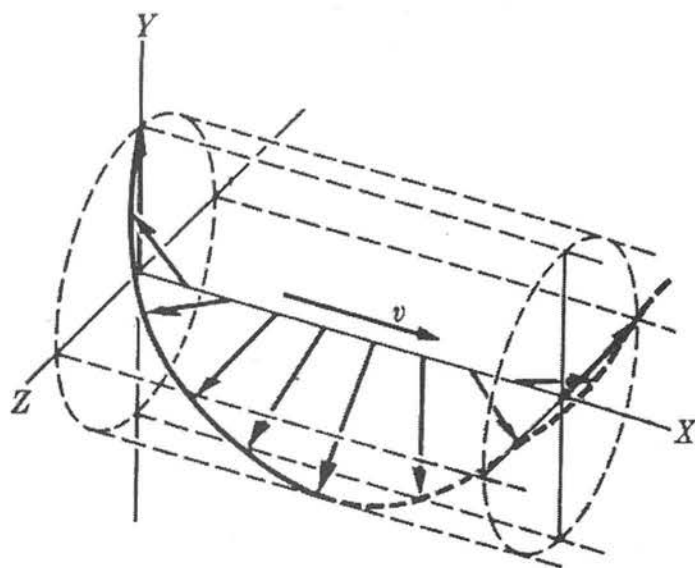


Figure 72. Circularly polarized wave.

In the diagram above the arrows correspond to either E or B . Only one vector is represented – for the sake of clarity of the diagram – the other is implied, i.e., orthogonal to the one indicated.

Appendix C: 'The Constitution of Man'

As appears in Bailey (1992).

"The constitution of man...is basically threefold, as follows:-

*The Monad*¹⁸³, or *Pure Spirit, The Father in Heaven*

This aspect reflects the three aspects of the Godhead:

Will or Power.....The Father.

Love-Wisdom.....The Son.

Active Intelligence.....The Holy Spirit.

and is only contacted at the final initiations¹⁸⁴, when man is nearing the end of his journey

and is perfected. The Monad reflects itself again in

Ego¹⁸⁵, Higher Self or Individuality [The Soul]

This aspect is potentially

Spiritual Will.....Atma¹⁸⁶.

Intuition.....Buddhi¹⁸⁷,

Love-Wisdom, the Christ principle.

Higher or Abstract Mind.....Higher Manas¹⁸⁸.

The Ego begins to make its power felt in advanced men, and increasingly on the

Probationary Path¹⁸⁹ until by the third initiation the control of the lower Self by the higher

is perfected, and the highest aspect begins to make its energy felt.

¹⁸³ 'Monad': "The One. The threefold Spirit on its own plane. In occultism it often means the unified triad – Atma, Buddhi, Manas; Spiritual Will, Intuition and Higher mind, - or the immortal part of man which reincarnates in the lower kingdoms and gradually progresses through the them to man and thence to the final goal." (Bailey, 1992: 222)A

¹⁸⁴ 'Initiation' "From the Latin root meaning the first principles of any science. Process of penetrating into the mysteries of the science of the Self and of the one Self in all selves. The Path of Initiation is the final stage of the path of evolution trodden by man, and is divided into five stages, called the Five Initiations." (Bailey, 1992: 218-219).

¹⁸⁵ 'Ego' or 'Soul': "The individualised Self-consciousness". (Bailey, 1992: 217).

¹⁸⁶ 'Atma': "The universal Spirit; the divine Monad; the seventh Principle; so called in the septenary constitution of man." (Bailey, 1992: 216) (see Figure 58).

¹⁸⁷ 'Buddhi': "The Universal Soul or Mind. It is the Spiritual Soul in man (the Sixth Principle) and therefore the vehicle of Atma, the Spirit, which is the Seventh Principle." (Bailey, 1992: 217).

¹⁸⁸ 'Manas': "Literally the Mind or, the mental faculty; that which distinguishes from man the mere animal. It is the individuation principle; that which enables man to know that he exists, feels and knows. It is divided in some schools into two parts, higher or abstract mind, and lower or concrete mind." (Bailey, 1992: 220).

¹⁸⁹ The Probationary Path is distinguished from the Initiatory path, which follows the Probationary Path. The former is the one allowed entry to the Adept or Master. A 'Master' or 'Adept' is the "human being who having traversed the path of evolution [has] entered the final stage of the path, the Path of Initiation [and]has taken five of the Initiations, and has therefore passed into the Fifth, or Spiritual Kingdom, having

The Ego reflects in

The Personality, or lower Self, physical plane man.

This aspect is also threefold:-

A mental body.....lower manas.

An emotional body.....astral body.

A physical body..... the dense physical *and the etheric body*¹⁹⁰.

The aim of evolution is therefore to bring man to the realisation of the Egoic aspect and to bring the lower nature under its control.¹⁹¹

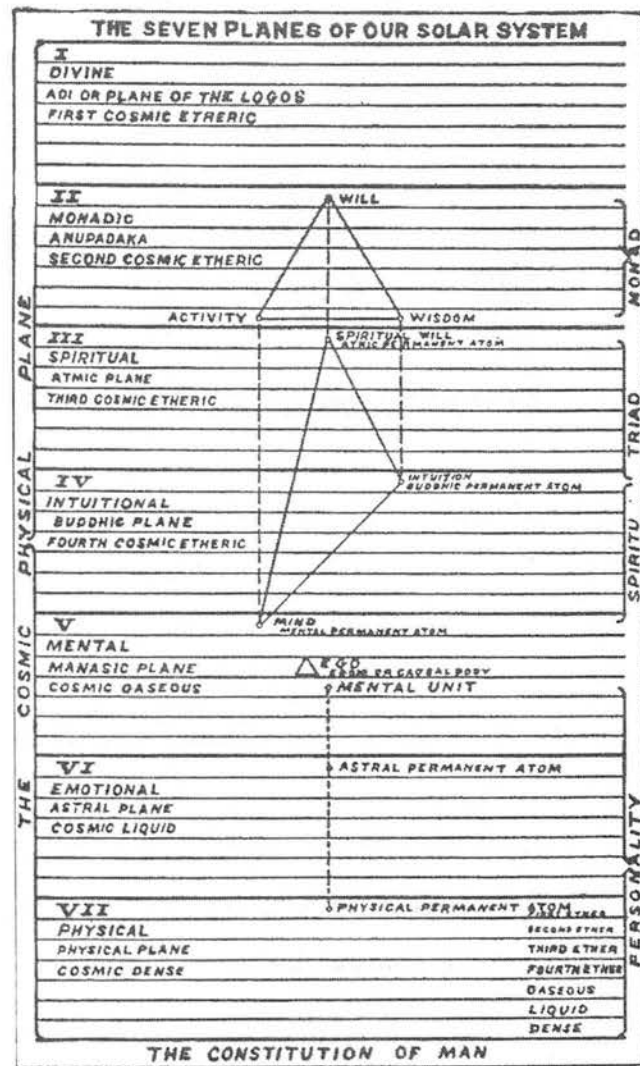


Figure 73. The Constitution of man from an esoteric perspective.

but two more initiations to take.” (Bailey, 1992: 215). Most of Alice Bailey’s writings stem directly from one of such beings, a Master called The Tibetan.

¹⁹⁰ ‘Etheric body’: “(Etheric double) The physical body of a human being is, according to occult teaching, formed of two parts, the dense physical body, and the etheric body. The dense physical body is formed of matter of the lowest three subplanes of the eophysical plane. The etheric body is formed of the four highest or etheric subplanes of the physical plane.” (Bailey, 1992: 218).

¹⁹¹ Bailey, 1992: xv.

Appendix D: Jiva as Released Spirit

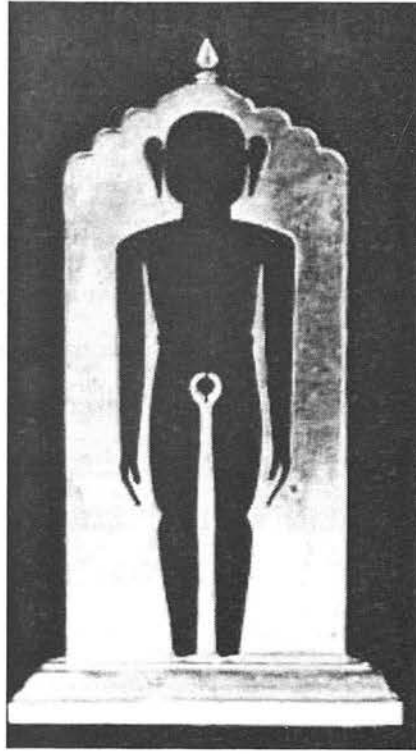


Figure 74. Jiva as Released Spirit, brass, Rajasthan, India, 19th century

This appendix deals with the establishment of formal and thematic parallels between a piece of artwork from Tantra philosophy and the work presented in this thesis.

The Indian work in question is a Tantric icon from 19th Century Rajasthan, India, entitled Jiva as Released Spirit. It consists of a polished brass plate with the cut out outline of a man. The absent human form is effectively a hole cut through the plate.

Tantra is an Indian esoteric tradition rooted in the religions of India. David Gordon White (2000) offers the following definition: ‘Tantra is that Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways.’ (White, 2000: 7).

Tantra's objective is the 'liberation or enlightenment' of the human being, and 'to become a total being through the awareness of one's psychic potencies.' (Mookerjee, 1977: 192). The process is carried through by the use of specific rituals, which usually involve the visualisation and offerings to a deity, and the chanting of the deity's mantra. These are practices which 'invoke the involvement of all senses, at different levels – physical [or] mental – in concert or singly. All these practices ...are directed towards self-enlightenment and a realisation of the vision of unity.' (Mookerjee, 1977: 15).

Central to Tantra's philosophy is the concept that reality is an indivisible whole, called Siva-Shakti or Cosmic Consciousness. Considering that reality is one, Tantra attempts to overcome the dichotomy that exists between the manifested, physical world, and its source, the spiritual cause of manifestation, that is, phenomena's inner reality. 'The spiritual, to a tantrika [a Tantra practitioner], is not in conflict with the organic, but [is] rather its fulfilment.' (Moorkerjee, 1977: 9).

Tantra art is at the same time an aesthetic and theological enquiry. That is, it presents itself to the senses but is concerned with the spiritual content of its message. 'Apart from its aesthetic value [tantra art's] real significance lies in its content, the meaning it conveys, the philosophy of life it unravels, the world-view it represents. In this sense tantra art is visual metaphysics.' (Mookerjee, 1977:41).

'Jiva' is a Sanskrit word meaning 'the incarnated Atma'. (Moorkerjee, 1977: 197). Atma (also spelled Atman) signifies 'the Pure Self, identified with the ultimate principle of the universe.' (Khanna, 1979: 171).

The artwork here considered being entitled Jiva as a Released Spirit, is therefore an artistic representation of the attainment by the Jiva of the state of Atma.

The image suggests the attainment of enlightenment and the release from the material bond, the latter represented by the brass plate. That is, it is the form of the human being, precisely its material nature that is absent from the representation. The material body has been rendered intangible, ineffable and even imponderable. This is the natural state of Atma cosmic consciousness.

The central void in the pieces Aveo Amor and Seal Upon Your Heart – the hole at the tip of the horn and the hole in the rings – is made to correspond to the notion of spiritual liberation, that is, the release from the bond of matter, the achieving of the *hierosgamos*. This mirrors the ‘release’ of the Jiva in the Tantric piece here considered.

In my work the concept for those central voids was not connected with this image. The Tantric artwork was discovered after my choice for representing the ineffability of the *hierosgamos* as a physical nothingness. The notion of the void seen through the tip of the horn had its origin in the piece [Arch]. In this never achieved piece, there was a hole at the apex of the arch, through which the candle flames carried by the lovers would merge and there would remain lit, creating one single flame. The idea for the hole came from here, and from my attempt at representing the hierogamic union as ineffable and of an imponderable nature.

Nevertheless, the formal and philosophical similarities between the Tantric icon and the artwork developed in this thesis justify the parallel being briefly discussed.

Appendix E: Description of the construction of the horn, rings and preparation of dress' buttons

Horn

Carving

- A solid block of plaster was cast into a wooden box
- The block was first cut with a saw, tapering it into a point
- Using surforms the shape of the helix was carved
- An extension to the initial plaster block was added and the helix's length augmented.



Figure 75. Construction of the horn.

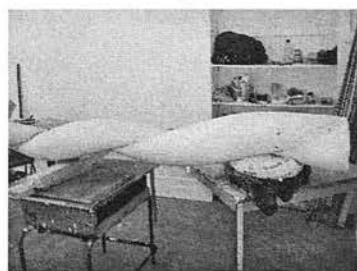
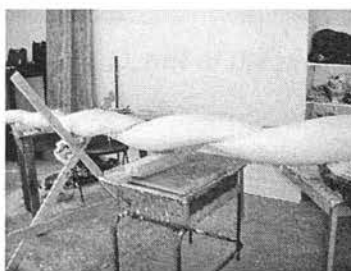
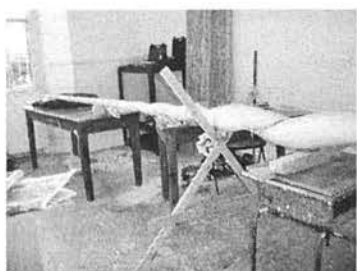


Figure 76. Plaster model.

- The top part of the model was divided into 4 transversal sections and each of these subdivided into 2, except for the tip, which was subdivided into 3 sections altogether. It performed a total of 15 sections.
- A mould in plaster was made, first the whole top section and following the divisions marked.
- The ensemble model and half mould was turned over and the remaining side was moulded.
- The mould was opened and the carved model discarded (only the tip end measuring approximately 1.50 metres has been kept).
- The mould was washed and left to dry fully.¹⁹²



Figure 77. Detail of the plaster mould.

Casting, technician Tim Chalk

- The dried interior of the mould was brushed with shellac and left to dry.
- A coat of demoulding wax was applied to the dried shellac coat.
- The 8 mould pieces corresponding to the full length of the ‘bottom’ half of the piece were placed together and set in a fixed unmovable position.

¹⁹² Tim Chalk, the casting technician later said that it would have been preferable to have left the mould wet in order to ease the release between the mould and the jesmonite cast. This was not possible however, since there was a lapse of six months between mould-making and the jesmonite casting.

- A coat of roughly 3 to 4 millimetres of jesmonite¹⁹³ was brushed onto the waxed walls of the fixed 'bottom' half of the mould and on the still 7 remaining separate moulds.
- A coat of jesmonite was applied on top of the previous one applied and before its setting the glass mesh was embedded on the gelling jesmonite.
- The process was repeated two times.
- When the whole half length was covered in glass-reinforced jesmonite, a metal rod was secured to the cast and left to fully set.
- The top parts of the mould were set in place on top of the fixed part of the mould and their joints secured with jesmonite and fibre glass.
- After setting for two days, the mould was opened and the cast released.
- The cast's surface required filling in the holes left by the joining process. Other irregularities and imperfections were corrected by filling but specially sanding by hand with sandpaper.
- The tip was sewn off in order to drill the hole at one of its ends. It was later replaced by inserting a metal rod and securing with jesmonite and cut strands of polyester.
- The cast was then ready to be gilded.

¹⁹³ Casting gypsum based material embedded in a resin coat.

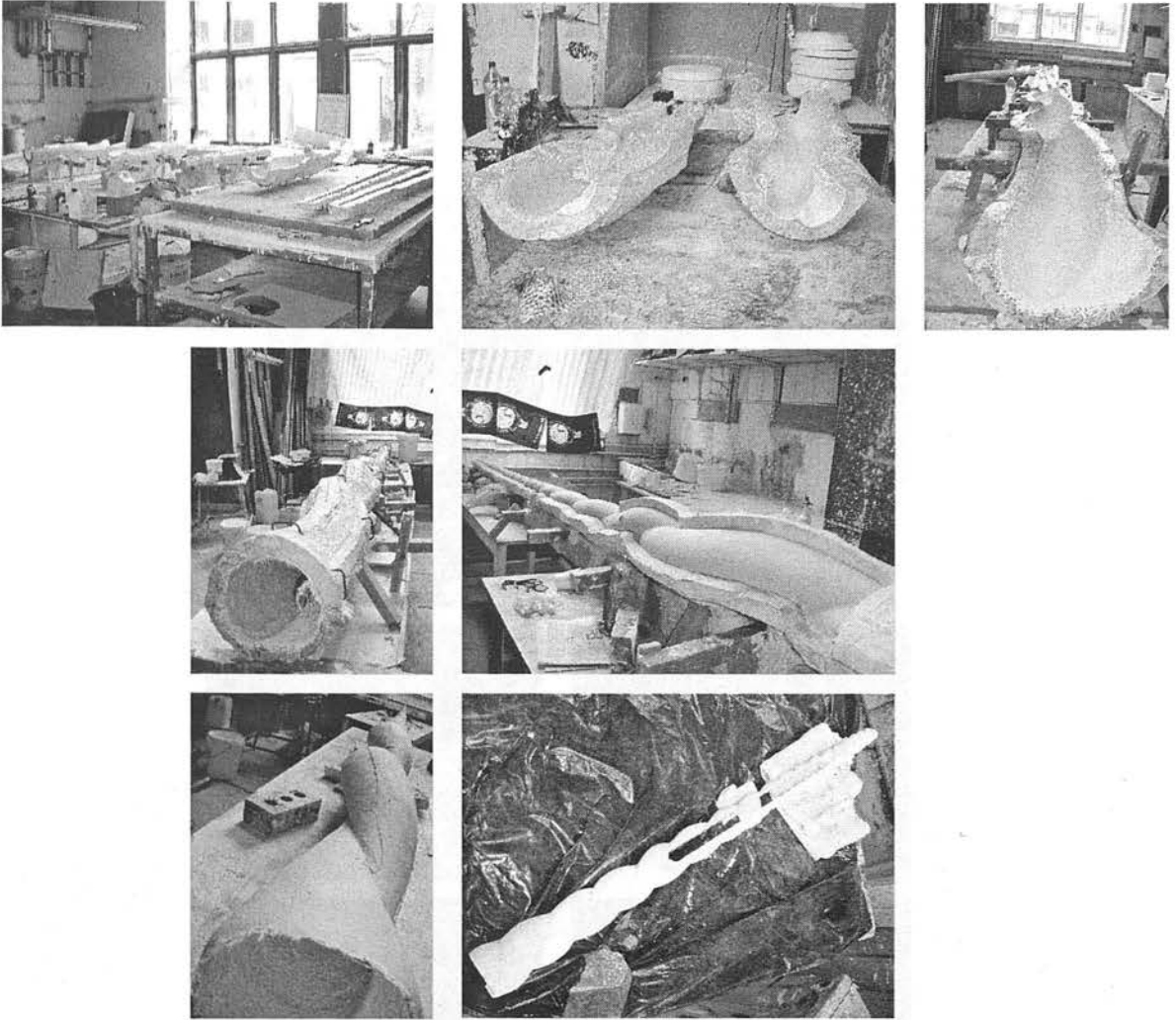


Figure 78. Stages of the jesmonite casting process with tip before reassembly.

Gilding (oil based gilding)

- The whole cast was carefully cleaned so as to remove all traces of dust and other particles.
- A first coat of yellow bole was applied, followed by three layers of red bole.
- Each layer was ground with very fine sandpaper.
- After the last layer of red bole was sanded down with the finest emery paper, seize was applied in an area possible to be gilt in one day's work, more or less six hours.
- Each seized section was left to dry overnight and on the following day gold leaf was applied, pressed onto the tacky seize.

- The work was carefully brushed and the places where the leaf had broken off or places which escaped gilding, the 'faulty' area was covered with size and a new leaf pressed onto it.
- The gold was left to dry, and then the piece was polished.
- For the uncovering of the red bole underneath 0000 grade wire wool was used to remove the gold in the desired areas.

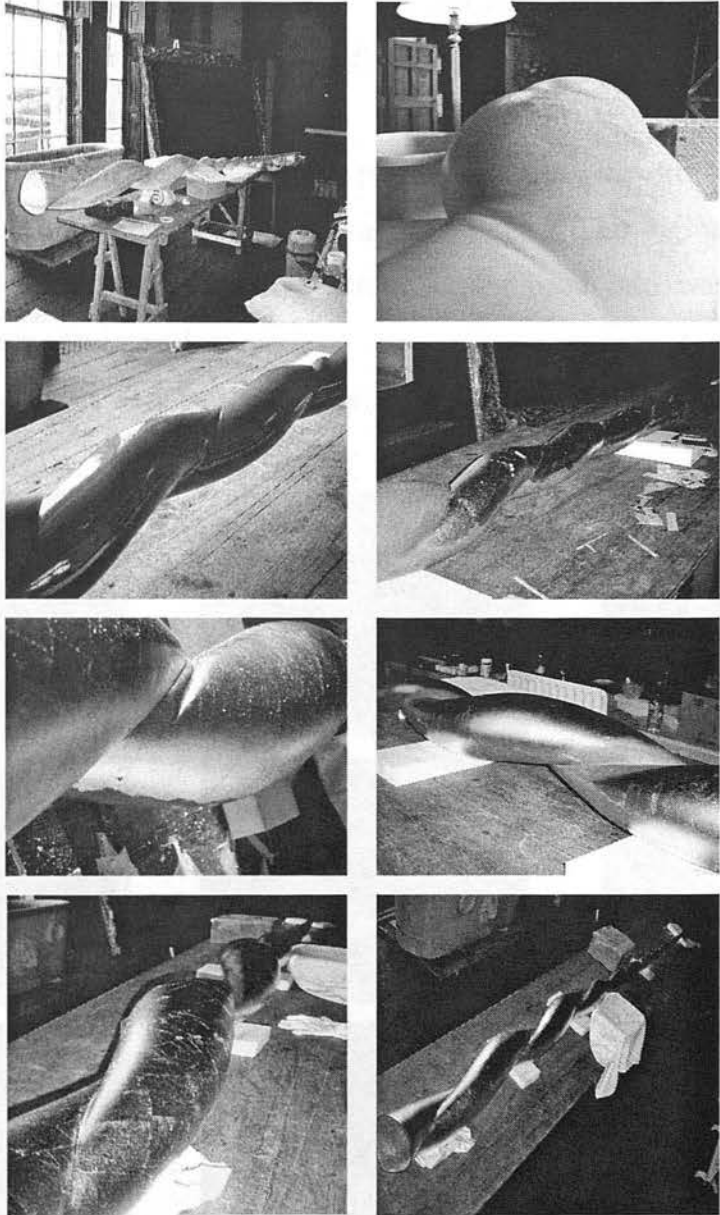


Figure 79. Stages of the gilding process with rubbing.

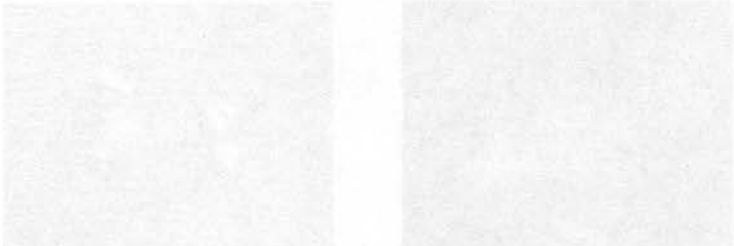


Figure 80. Coating of the rings.

Rings

- The ring fingers of a man and a woman were covered in high definition rubber.
- The rubber covered fingers were pressed together and the rubber left to set. This created the original mould
- In order to make the 'female' ring, a plaster cast was taken from the rubber, using high definition jewellery gypsum. The plaster was then surrounded by alginate. The alginate form (as a new mould) was then dipped into melted wax. This wax was cast into silver.
- In order to make the 'male' ring a plaster cast was taken from the original rubber mould. Alginate was poured around it and kept. This alginate mould was then filled with alginate and the resulting cast dipped into wax. This wax was afterwards cast into silver.
- The silver casts were washed and polished and then gold plated.

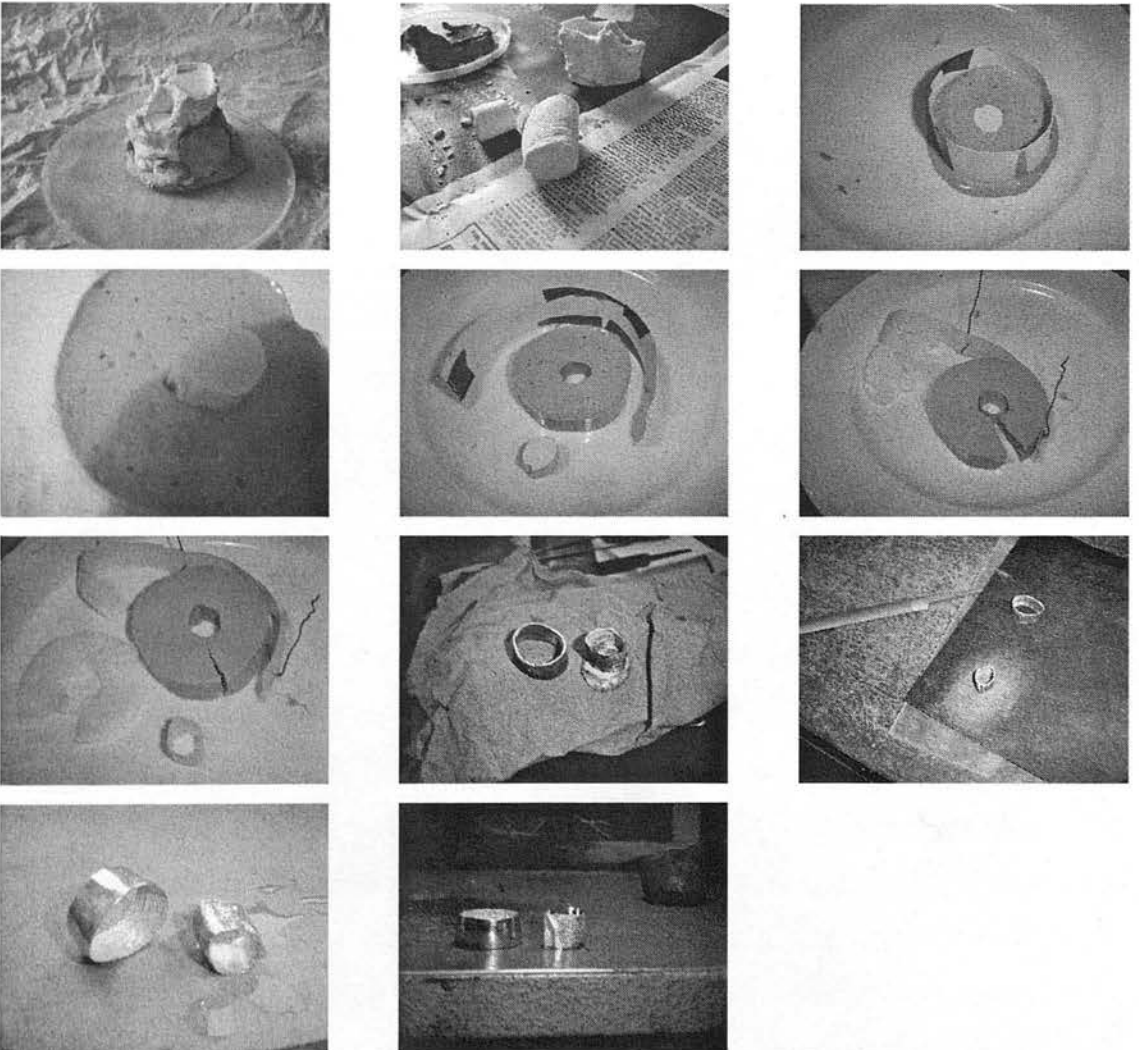


Figure 80. Casting of the rings.

Dress' Buttons

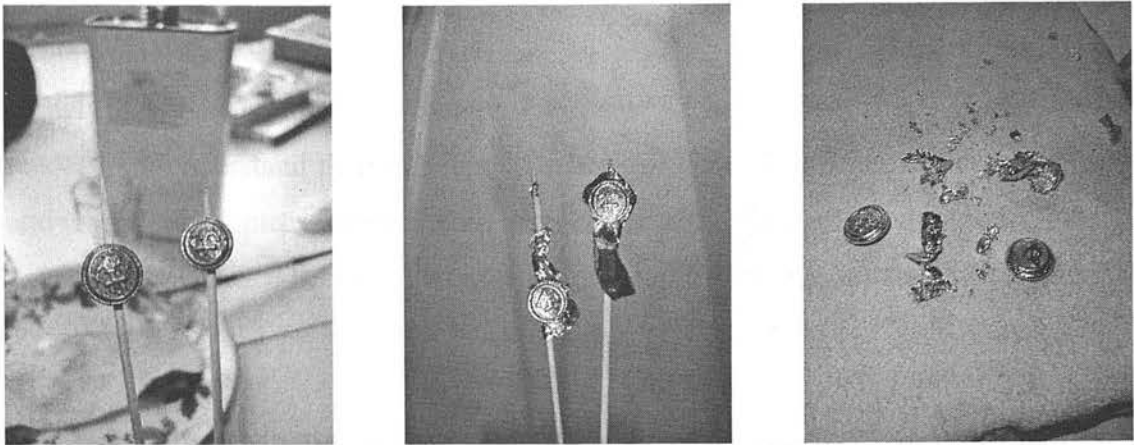


Figure 81. Brass buttons and gold leafing.

Glossary of Terms

(Note: This glossary does not undertake to explain exhaustively all the terms below, namely those stemming from esoteric literature. It serves as a rough guide so that the reader may understand their connotations and use here. For further in-depth definitions and explanations, please see the main body of the text. The esoteric definitions have been borrowed from Alice Bailey's literature quoted in the Bibliography for this thesis.)

Anagogy – The elevation of temporal realities to the spiritual realities represented by the latter. It denotes the conscious ascending from the visible to the invisible, from the literal to the symbolic, from the apparent to the hidden, from the sensitive to the intelligible.

Analogy – The establishing of comparisons and relations between one thing and another on the basis of a common element. It is a process whereby meaning is created or discovered by semantically associating and correlating aspects which do not seem to have a connection *a priori*.

Divine Triad – The spiritual human being, in its higher expression, manifestation of the Monad. It is understood as the germinal spirit containing the potentialities of the divine in the individual and in nature. These potentialities will be unfolded during the course of cosmic and human evolution. This Triad is responsible for the individualised or separated Self or Soul.

Esotericism – The study of energy and forces, their source and their effect, considered to dwell within manifestation and understood to be responsible for phenomena. Esotericism deals with meanings contained within expression. The prefix 'eso' signifies knowledge that resides within form and appearance, being therefore not apparent. Esotericism's emphasis is on knowing and working creatively with the energies which are the source of manifestation. It teaches the ability to function freely in the world of meaning. It is occupied with the mediating principle between life and substance, and it involves a life

lived in tune with the inner subjective realities. From this perspective esotericism is of practical application.

Heuristic – A practical method or process which allows the acquiring of knowledge for oneself. It is an experimental process, involving the finding of a solution by trial and error.

Hierosgamos – Greek word for ‘sacred union’: *hieros gamos*. In this thesis it is used to denote the resolution of the polarity Personality – Spirit (or Monad) in humanity. It corresponds to the uninterrupted flow of spiritual energy between the three bodies of the individual (Personality, Soul, and Spirit as proposed by esotericism), and is hence the spiritual realisation of the being, that is, its conscious encounter with the Spirit or Monad. It is ‘union’ because it joins, and it is ‘divine’ because it is essentially a spiritual realisation. It is in this thesis understood as the outcome of the journey of the realisation of the Self, coincident with the encounter with the God within.

Image – A formal or mental representation with resemblance of the thing it intends to represent. Direct perception being when the thing is experienced directly by the senses (as in direct sensitivity). The image is indirect perception, since that which is represented is not present but resides elsewhere.

Logos – The spiritual principle or consciousness manifested through every human being. The outward expression, or the effect of the cause behind manifestation. Thus, for instance, speech is the logos of thought, being translated as ‘word’ in the metaphysical sense. In esoteric philosophy considered to always be concealed.

Monad or Spirit – The One. In esotericism it often means the unified or Divine Triad, or the immortal part of the human being, which reincarnates and gradually progresses to the final goal, i.e., the conscious merging with the Spirit.

Ontology – The branch of metaphysics (philosophy) and of esotericism dealing with the nature of being.

Personality – In esotericism the sum total of the three lower aspects in a human being, used by the Soul as its vehicles of expression. It comprises a mental, an emotional (astral), and a physical body (the dense physical and the etheric or vital body).

Poetic Logic – The logic of the subject, that is, a personal, subjective logic, which creates by analogical semantic connection. Proposes an individual vision, which is nevertheless able to resonate with issues of universal relevance. It can be used within any worldview or system. It differs from mathematic logic, for instance, which is not personal but impinges on the subject from the exterior.

Saudade – Portuguese word defining a state of ontological longing, that is, nostalgia for the wholeness of being.

Soul or Ego – An entity conceived as the essence, substance, or actuating cause of individual life, especially of life manifested in physical activities; the vehicle of individual existence, separate in nature from the Personality aspect. It is understood as that aspect which gives each individual life or being and consciousness.

Spirituality – Relating to attitudes, relationships, and to the moving forward from one level of consciousness to the next. It refers to the ontological process as it drives the individual forward from one range of sensitivity to another. The word ‘spiritual’ relates to expansions of consciousness, that is, to all activity which leads toward some form of further development.

Symbol – A specific type of image which does not possess a literal or objective signification, therefore suggesting a plethora of interpretative meanings. It is that which in phenomena has the capacity of revealing meanings and the reasons inherent in that form or occurrence. Being an outward or visible sign of an inner spiritual reality, the symbol is an image or circumstance that joins the appearance and the concept in a form or event. Symbology is therefore the study of correspondences between meanings and significances which are understood to reside within form and which struggle to emerge. The symbol possesses an essentially analogical nature.

Teleology – The explanation of phenomena by the purpose they serve. The study of final causes in nature, and any activity that tends towards the achievement of a goal, in this research identified as the knowledge or identification with the Spirit.

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